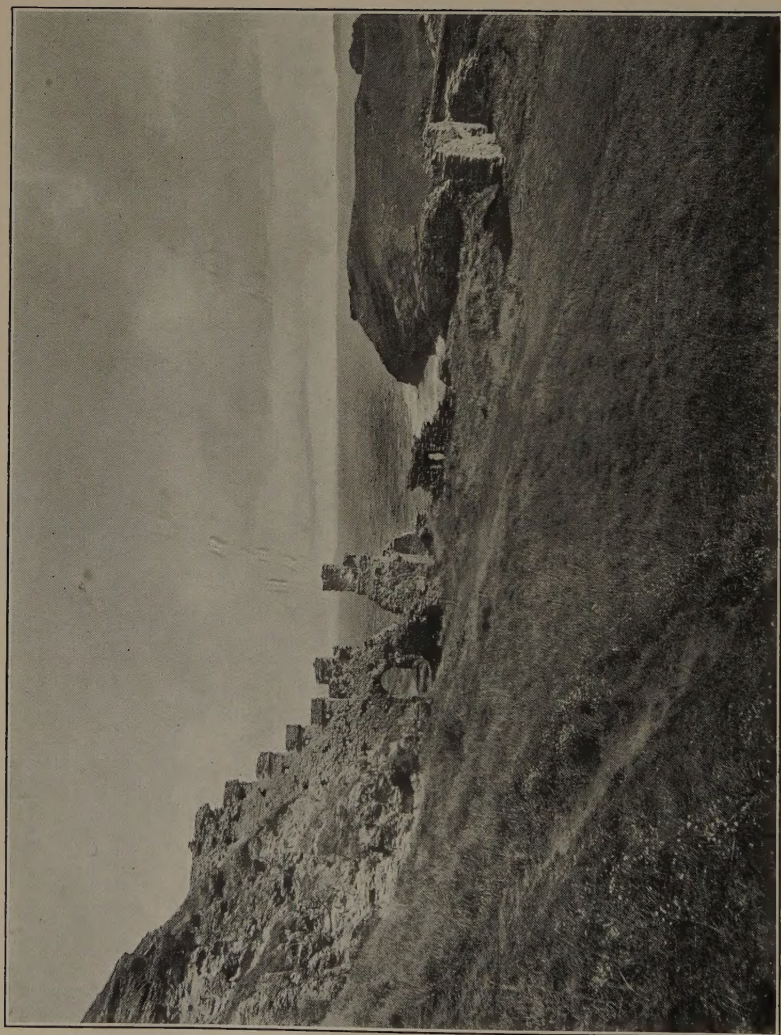


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THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE
STORY OF KING ARTHUR

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THE REMAINS OF THE ANCIENT CASTLE ON THE ISLAND AT TINTAGEL,
WHERE KING ARTHUR WAS BORN

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING
OF THE
STORY OF KING ARTHUR

PUBLISHED AT KING ARTHUR'S HALL
TINTAGEL

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TO
ALL LOVERS OF KING ARTHUR
AND HIS IDEALS
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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*Most of the Illustrations in this book are taken from the original
paintings in King Arthur's Hall, Tintagel.*

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE STORY OF KING ARTHUR

PART I KING ARTHUR

1. THE STORY OF KING ARTHUR

MALORY's great work, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, has been taken as the principal authority for this symbolic story because it gives a fuller account of everything connected with the subject than any other book.

It was written, presumably, to point the lessons that may be learnt from the deeds of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

There is no doubt that Arthur was a national hero in those far-off days, and that the master mind of Malory conceived the idea of adding to historical facts all the romance and tradition that had grown around the kingly figure and so producing a story that would further the moral and religious teaching of his day. He developed also the symbolic value of many incidents in the lives of Arthur and his knights; this accounts for such apparently impossible events as the appearance of Excalibur in the lake, the miracle of the Siege Perilous, and the fantastic quests which were followed by some of the knights. The highly symbolical character of these stories satisfied the seekers after truth who were able to interpret them, and the power of the symbols with their half-hidden meanings has caused the history of King Arthur to live from century to century and to hold a message even for the present generation. And this interpretation of the romance in no way detracts from its interest, but, on the contrary, adds to it the charm of mystery.

Malory also took incidents from the inner life and spiritual struggles of Arthur and his knights and wrote of them as if they were victories and defeats of a material nature. And sometimes the spiritual and material became merged, for

Malory was a writer with poetic vision, a gift which he used to the full.

It is the story of a great tragedy; throughout the book may be traced the working out of a tremendous destiny. But, although the life of its principal character appears to end in disaster, taken in a wide sense it suggests triumph over human weakness, and the glory of achievement remains to fill with hope all those who enter the spiritual knighthood to fight materialism.

The figures of the knights are but part of the background that shows Arthur in high relief; they contribute to the fate which overtakes him, but they have no share in his destiny; they fade from the picture, but Arthur remains; they die, but the end of Arthur's earthly career is one of mystery, and it is said his spirit lingers in some place of rest and will one day return.

That Caxton understood Malory's intention is shown by the wording of his original preface, which reads as follows:

"And I, according to my copy, have done set it in imprint, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke, humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates, of what estate or degree they be of that shall see and read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance and to follow the same.

Wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness and chivalries. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown.

And for to pass the time this book shall be pleasant to read in, but for to give faith and believe that all is true that is contained therein, ye be at your liberty, but all is written for our doctrine, and for to beware that we fall not to vice nor sin, but to exercise and follow virtue by which we may come and attain to good fame and renown in this life, and after this short and transitory life, to come unto everlasting bliss in heaven, the which he grant us that reigneth in heaven, the blessed Trinity. Amen."



THE PATHWAY TO KING ARTHUR'S CASTLE, TINTAGEL.

2. THE FORETELLING OF THE BIRTH OF ARTHUR

In the sixth century of Christendom, shortly before the death of Aurelius, there appeared in the sky at Winchester a star of wonderful magnitude and brightness that sent forth a ray, at the end of which was a globe of fire in form of a dragon out of whose mouth issued two other rays, one of which seemed to stretch beyond the extent of Gaul, the other ended in seven lesser rays which pointed towards the Irish Sea.

At the appearance of this star terror and amazement seized the people; even Uther became afraid and wished to hear from the learned men what it portended. He ordered Merlin to be called, amongst others, and commanded him to discover to him the signification of the star.

Merlin burst into tears, and with a loud voice cried out that the King of the Britons had been treacherously poisoned, and that his death would be disastrous to Britain unless God helped them.

He urged Uther to hasten and engage the enemy against whom he was then fighting, for if he did so the victory would be his and he would be crowned King of all Britain.

"For the star," he said, "and the fiery dragon under it signify yourself, and the ray extending towards the Gallic coast portends that you shall have a most potent son, to whose power all those kingdoms over which the ray reaches shall be subject."

Uther, although he doubted the truth of Merlin's declaration, pursued his march against the enemy and by the end of the day had achieved the victory.

He then returned to Winchester, where in due course the King was buried.

Uther was by common consent advanced to the kingdom, and remembering the explanation Merlin had given of the star, he commanded two dragons to be made of gold, in likeness of the dragon he had seen at the end of the star's ray.

As soon as these were finished he made a present of one to the Cathedral Church of Winchester, but reserved the other for himself, to be carried with him to his wars. From this time, therefore, he was called Uther Pendragon, which in the Celtic tongue signified the dragon's head.

3. THE BIRTH OF ARTHUR

Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, was with his wife Igerne, present at the coronation of Uther. Igerne was the most beautiful lady in Britain and when the King cast his eyes upon her he fell passionately in love with her. Upon discovering this, Gorlois left the Court without leave, taking his wife with him, and when Uther commanded him to return he refused to obey.

Then Uther, in his anger, got his army together and marched to the castle of Gorlois in Cornwall. For safety Gorlois placed Igerne in Tintagel Castle, a fortress of great strength that stood upon a high cliff surrounded by the sea except where a narrow ridge connected it with the mainland. At this point, which was the only way to the castle from the land, three men could hold it against the armed forces of the kingdom.

In the battle which followed, Gorlois was killed, and Uther then married Igerne.

In due time Arthur was born at Tintagel.

Merlin advised Uther to make arrangements for the up-bringing of the babe. He also suggested that Sir Ector should be summoned to take charge of him and that the child be handed over to Sir Ector secretly at the postern gate of Tintagel Castle. The object of this was to protect the child against the followers of Gorlois, Igerne's first husband.

Merlin's plan was carried out. The King commanded two knights and two ladies to take the child, bound in a cloth of gold, and deliver him to what poor man they met at the postern gate of the castle.

So the child was delivered unto Merlin, and so he bare it forth unto Sir Ector, and made an holy man to christen him, and named him Arthur.

4. THE CLAIM OF ARTHUR TO THE THRONE IS ESTABLISHED

Arthur was brought up by Sir Ector as if he were his own son and neither Arthur nor any but those who were concerned in his being taken away from Tintagel knew who he really was.

When King Uther fell sick of a great malady, all the barons with Merlin came before the King. Then Merlin said aloud unto King Uther, "Sir, shall your son Arthur be king after your days, of this realm with all the appurtenance?" Then



ARTHUR AS A BABE BEING HANDED TO MERLIN AT THE POSTERN
GATE OF TINTAGEL CASTLE.

Uther Pendragon turned him, and said in the hearing of them all, "I give him God's blessing and mine, and bid him pray for my soul, and righteously and worshipfully that he claim the throne upon forfeiture of my blessing," Therewith he yielded up the ghost, and then was he interred as befitted a King.

Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and counselled him to send for all the lords of the realm that they might decide who should rightfully be King of the realm.

In the great church at London where they all met, there stood before the high altar a great marble stone four square, and in the middle of it was an anvil a foot high. Therein was stuck a naked sword, upon which was written in gold, "Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and this anvil is likewise King born of all Britain."

But none might stir the sword nor move it.

Some time later, Arthur, wishing to get a sword for his foster brother, Sir Kay, thought of the sword in the church and found he was able to pull it out of the stone.

When it was discovered that he had drawn the sword, it was replaced in the anvil, a watch was set over it, the nobles were assembled again and all tried to emulate the feat of Arthur. All failed except he, and by that the people knew he was the rightful heir to the throne.

There are several instances given in *Le Morte d'Arthur* of a sword being fixed in a stone or an anvil; the one who could draw it being considered the person rightfully entitled to some position then defined. Malory chose this imaginative or symbolic way of explaining that an examination took place.

The sword was the principal weapon of a knight, but in addition to its importance for the purpose of fighting, it was of equal importance to him symbolically.

The object of the test, which was applied to determine who was the man best fitted to become King, was to discover the person who possessed in the greatest degree the virtues which the various parts of the sword symbolised—Faith, Purity and Humility—and who was also a Christian. The people chose for their King the man who could best stand the test. It was thus that the decision fell on Arthur. It was he whom the people were willing should have Power over them.

Arthur was King by right of birth, but was also chosen by the people.

5. THE CORONATION OF ARTHUR

Upon the day of Pentecost the people desired that Arthur should be crowned King.

Therewith they all, both rich and poor, kneeled down together, and then Arthur took his sword between both his hands and offered it upon the altar in the presence of the Archbishop, and so was he made knight of the best man that was there, and received his sword again.

Arthur's acceptance of the sword implied that he would uphold the principles for which it stood, for the sword also had personal symbolic meanings, which were—

The blade was symbolical of Faith. This being the inward part of the weapon represented the inward or spiritual part of his nature, and as the blade of his sword had to be kept shining bright, so did this remind him that his soul had to be kept pure.

The scabbard was symbolical of Purity. This being the outward part of the weapon represented the outward or temporal part of his nature, and as the scabbard, owing to its contact with the world, had always to be kept clean because it would have marked a knight as unworthy if it had been otherwise, so did this remind him that his temporal body had to be kept clean in every way.

The sword as a whole signified Power. The handle and pommel together were symbolical of Humility, and as these were the parts by which the weapon was controlled, he was reminded that Power must always be used with Humility.

Arthur then dedicated himself and his weapons to the service of God and his fellow men and, reversing the sword, used it to represent the Cross.

The point of the sword was symbolic of his obedience, and the two edges of the sword, of his two duties as a knight, that of service to God and to his fellow men.

And so anon was the coronation made. And there was he sworn unto his lords and the commons to be a true knight and to stand with true justice from thenceforth the days of his life. Also then he made all lords that held of the crown to come in and to do service as they ought to do.

His prayer at his coronation was, "Lord Christ, God's Son, be to us now in aid that I may in life hold God's laws."

6. THE WARS OF ARTHUR

There were eleven kings who were not agreeable to Arthur's becoming King of Britain. Some doubted his right, others were jealous of him; and as they would not accept him to rule over them he had to fight them all until he had defeated them.

One of the supporters of Arthur, King Leodegrance of Cameliard, was also sorely pressed by them, so King Arthur and his army, after their own victory, went to his aid, slew many of the enemy and put the rest to flight.

It was on this occasion that Arthur first saw Guenever, the King's daughter, whom he afterwards married.

The eleven kings then withdrew their forces to the north.

King Lot of Lothian and Orkney, one of the eleven hostile kings, sent his wife, Margawse, who was the sister of King Arthur, to his Court as a spy. She remained there a month, and so captivated Arthur, who did not know she was his sister, that he fell in love with her.

Merlin afterwards warned King Arthur that he had done a thing that displeased God and that the result of his sin, Mordred, would one day destroy him and his fellowship.

7. ARTHUR COMMENCES A NEW LIFE

Arthur having defeated his enemies, commenced the task of consolidating his kingdom.

He was exhorted by one named Amytans as follows:

" First, serve God with humble heart, and let the wand of justice pass through the land.

Thus shalt thou choose the ministers of justice.

Avoid avaricious and wrathful men, eschew unfit men, for this shall be thy meed in the day of judgment.

Be diligent to enquire how judgment is given.

Visit every chieftown throughout the bounds of thy kingdom.

Give thine ears to the poor.

Kings while minors may be excused, but when of age, they must punish those that have wrested justice.

Temper justice with mercy.

Be true and staple in thy words : a king should be the very light of truth.

Invite thy dukes, earls, great barons, thy poor knights, and thy bachelors, and welcome them severally.

Keep company not with the rich man only, but with the poor, worthy man also, yet remembering that familiarity breeds contempt.

Choose out of each district an aged knight to be thy counsellor.

Give to the poor worthy man the horse thou thyself ridest, give to thy lords things strange and uncouth ; so too shall the queen give to maidens and ladies.

Remember that the giver should be as glad in his cheer as the receiver.

Knowest thou not what shall be thy part, when thou passeth away from this world ; virtue and honour will alone remain.

Riches well spent are the best kept.

Whoso will be a conqueror, let him not reck to give largely, for both love and fear spring from liberality.

Choose the mean between prodigality and avarice.

Whoso chooses to be liberal must understand three things, the amount he has, to whom he giveth, and the fit time for giving.

The king that becomes indigent overthrows his subjects, for the voice of the oppressed shrieketh up ceaselessly to heaven, and God smiteth down with the sword of vengeance ; for God hath given the king the wand of justice, and if he oppresses them whom he should rule, God shall stretch His mighty hand for correction.

Herein, alas ! is the blindness of kings.

The blessed token of a king's wisdom is for him to restrain his hand from his people's riches.

Take care to whom you give.

Let not the virtuous and the vicious stand in the same degree.

Beware of flattery ; a flatterer is worse than a storm or a pestilence.

Three things make flatterers in favour : first, the blind ignorance of kings ; secondly, where a king is vicious himself ; and thirdly, where the king is so foolish that he knows their flattery, yet withdraws from reproving them.

If a king stood like his own degree his people would be virtuous and wise, thus the rule of his people and kingdom standeth only in the king's virtue. Since thou art wholly master of the schools, teach them, and they shall gladly learn."

It is said that King Arthur, taking this advice, vowed that he would spread the principles of Christianity, and thus gained the love of his people.



KING ARTHUR IS PROMISED THE SWORD EXCALIBUR BY THE
LADY OF THE LAKE.

Malory illustrates this by the narratives of Arthur's encounter with King Pellinore and of the gift of the Sword Excalibur to Arthur.

The inference to be drawn from these stories is that Arthur required some greater Power than he possessed at that time. A sword is representative of Power and therefore Arthur was to have a new one.

During the fight with King Pellinore Arthur's sword was broken (that is, the blade and handle were separated) and but for the intervention of Merlin, his counsellor, he would have been killed.

Merlin promised Arthur that he should have another Sword to replace the one which was broken.

They rode until they came to Dosmary Pool, where in the middle of the water Arthur saw an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair Sword in its hand. Merlin told Arthur that this was the Sword of which he had spoken.

Then they saw a damsel going upon the lake. Merlin told Arthur this was the Lady of the Lake, that she would come to him soon, and that if he spake her fair she would give him the Sword.

Soon she came to Arthur, saluting him, and he returned the salute.

"Damosel," said Arthur, "what Sword is that, that yonder arm holdeth above the water. I would it were mine, for I have no sword."

"Sir Arthur, King," said the damosel, "if ye will give me a gift when I ask it of you, ye shall have it."

"By my faith," said Arthur, "I will give you what gift ye will ask."

The damosel then told Arthur to go to a barge that was near, row himself to the place where the Sword was and take it and the scabbard. She also said that she would ask for her gift when she desired it.

Arthur rowed to the spot where the Sword had appeared and took it, and as he looked on it he liked it passing well.

The above scene is full of allegory and symbolism.

The conditions upon which the new Sword was to be his clearly show that this incident was meant to teach that if Divine help is asked for in order to be able to carry out some high intention, it will be given. The new Sword which Arthur liked passing well was a Sword of the Soul, the weapon with which he was to fight to overcome the spiritual darkness of the land. It was stated that

when it was used "it was so bright that it gave light like thirty torches."

The explanation of the mysterious incident of the Sword coming from the water is that the Druids believed (and Merlin was one of the last of the Druid bards) that the greatest material gift God had given to man was water. In order to live men must have food and water; food they must work for, but water is provided free and fit for use.

In this way the Sword connected with and coming from the water symbolised that it was a gift from God to Arthur.

Water, also, has always been considered an emblem of purity, and the Druids believed there was an affinity between the souls of men and the purity of water. Therefore the Sword, which represents Faith, Purity, and Humility, was when taken by Arthur from the purifying element, water, held to be pure and in contact with his soul.

Its being jewelled signified that it was a valuable gift, also that it was beautiful, and its name, Excalibur, meaning 'cut steel,' signified its strength. Thus it symbolically portrayed the ideal Arthur had in his mind. His personal request to the Lady of the Lake to give it to him, and his going alone upon the lake to procure it, symbolically showed his firm intention to rule his kingdom wisely and well as in the sight of God.

This incident took place at the time when Arthur was planning the foundation of the Order of the Round Table. It shows that he began this new era strengthened by God, and that the Sword Excalibur was a symbolic representation of Divine strength and beauty.

Later on, his anxiety that the Sword should be returned to the lake before he passed to Avilion showed that he considered it had been a personal gift to him.

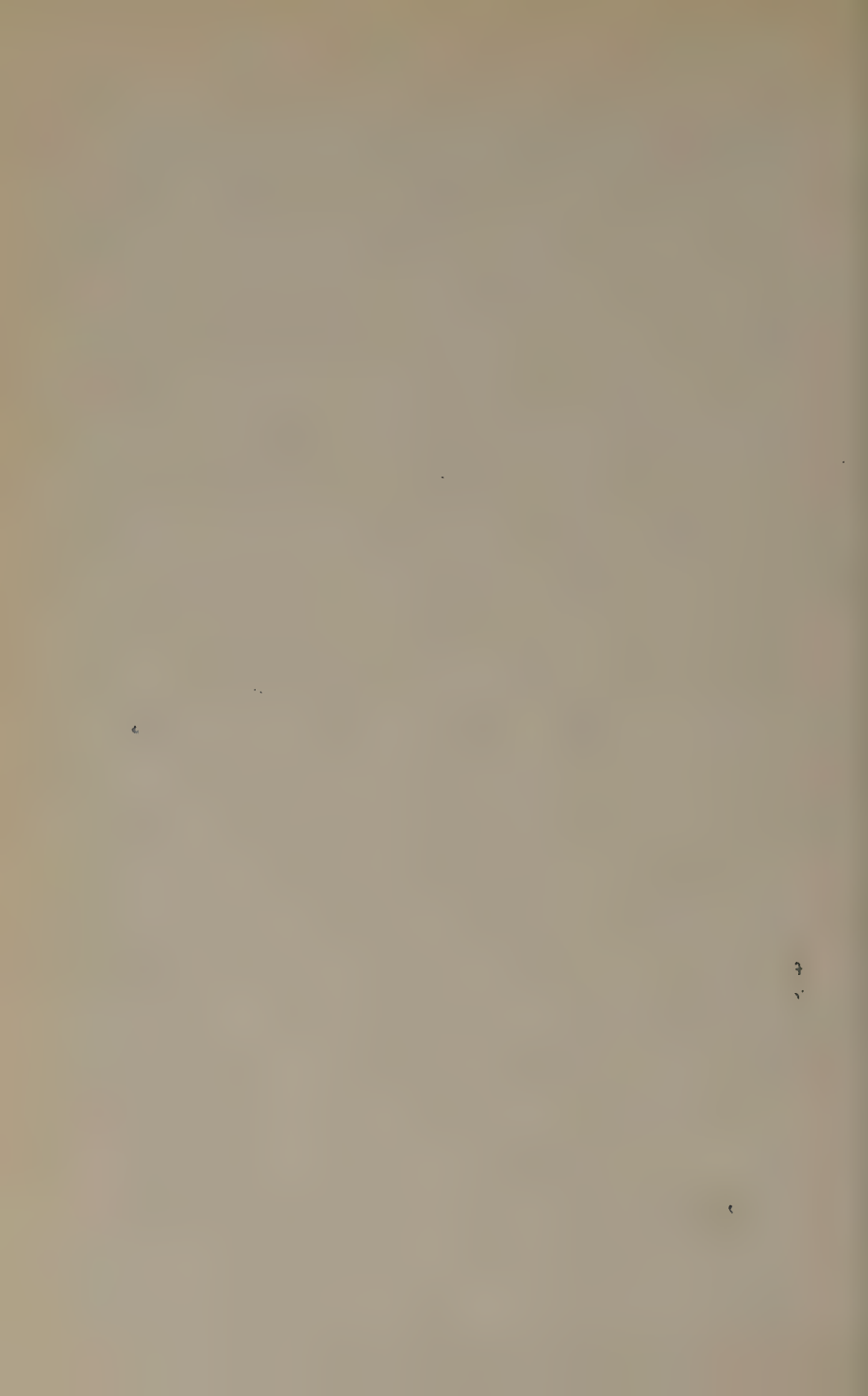
8. THE BIRTH OF MORDRED

Although the adventure of the Lady of the Lake marked the beginning of a new era in the life of Arthur, the shadow of his sin with Margawse still hung over him, and this was destined to be one of the causes which brought about his destruction.

After Arthur had received his new Sword, or, in other words, had determined to make a fresh start, and had been given help to do so, Mordred was born, and Arthur attempted, in conjunction with Merlin, to destroy him. The effort was unsuccessful. Mordred was saved and cared for, and in due time



THE REPRESENTATION OF THE SWORD EXCALIBUR.



he remorselessly pursued Arthur to his doom. In the story of Balin and Balan, Malory describes the consequences of Arthur's loss of virtue.

The first sin of Arthur led him to commit another and a greater one, which made it more difficult for him to escape from the result of his previous one. The figure of Mordred stands, from this time, as a symbol to show that sin follows and influences the whole life of the person who commits it, and causes untold misery to others. It destroys all the useful work a person does, however great and wonderful that may be.

9. ARTHUR FAILS IN A TEST TO DETERMINE WHO IS THE BEST KNIGHT

Another test by drawing a sword was arranged. This time it had to be taken from a scabbard. Arthur failed; all his knights failed; but Balin the Savage, an uncouth knight, asked to be allowed to try. "Worthiness, and good tatches, and good deeds," said he, "are not only in arrayment, but manhood and worship is hid within man's person, and many a worshipful knight is not known unto all people." For this he was given permission to make the test, and was successful.

Had Arthur been pure, Balin would not have had an opportunity to obtain the power which was implied by his possession of the sword. Balin misused this power. First he insisted upon keeping the sword, although it did not belong to him, in spite of being warned that the retention of it would be harmful to him. With it he killed the Lady of the Lake in the presence of Arthur, when, as a visitor to his Court, she was under his protection. Then he killed the knight, Sir Lanceor, who was sent by King Arthur to avenge the death of the Lady of the Lake. The lady-love of Sir Lanceor, Colombe, was so grieved at his death that she killed herself for dole and sorrow with her dead knight's sword.

Then Balin travelled to the Court of King Pelles, where he was received with pleasure, but he refused to leave his sword behind in the robing chamber, as was the custom. At the table he drew his sword against King Pelles, who struck it with a weapon so that it was broken.

Balin, fleeing from the hall, came to a room wherein was a spear with which he struck King Pelles a blow, which is known as the dolorous stroke, and which caused many people to die and great distress to come upon the land.

Afterwards Balin fought with his own brother Balan and each killed the other. They were both buried by Merlin, who took the sword, removed the pommel, and set on another one. He then left the scabbard in a place where Galahad should find it later on, and put the sword in the stone from which Sir Galahad pulled it after he was made a knight.

The tragedy of Balin and Balan can be directly traced from the lapse of grace of Arthur, and the story is meant to point out the great misery caused by the failure of those in authority to use their power with humility.

The sword and scabbard were the same as those used by Galahad at a later date, and whilst the sword was in his hands, with the new pommel affixed by Merlin, nothing but good was done with it.

10. THE ROUND TABLE

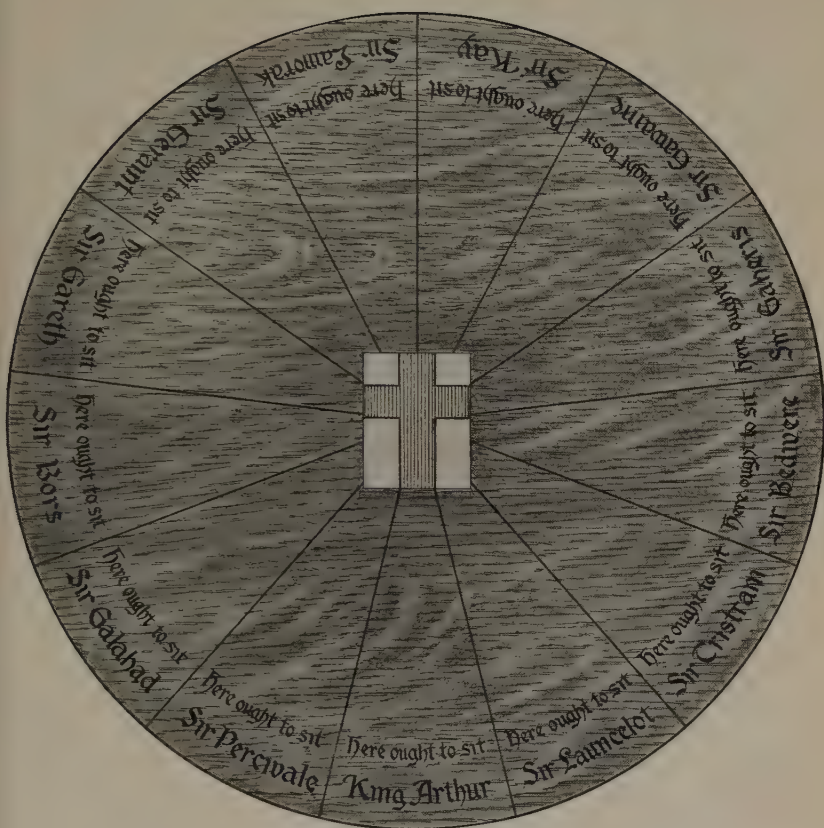
It had been foretold that in the reign of Arthur a Round Table would be established by him in the Name of the Trinity, one seat of which was to remain void in readiness for a knight yet unborn who should bring to an end the adventure of the Sangreal.

Merlin had counselled Uther Pendragon to establish this Table, telling him that by doing so great honour would come to him and great profit to his soul, and that it should also be a thing that most should be spoken of through the world.

Uther Pendragon told Merlin that it was his wish to perform the Lord's will in all that was in him, and in His name he made the Table.

The Table was at first made for only thirteen knights, but had to be enlarged afterwards. The number thirteen was emblematical of the Table of the Passion, that being the first of three important tables at which thirteen persons sat in close fellowship. It was said that Joseph, when he came to Britain, made a Table to seat thirteen persons in remembrance of the Table he had known in his native land. He made it circular in shape, and this was the second great Table. The third was the Round Table of King Arthur.

Merlin made this Round Table in token of the roundness of the world, and said, "By the Round Table is the world signified by right, for all the world, Christian and heathen, repair unto the Round Table, and when they are chosen to be of the Fellowship of the Round Table they think them more blessed and more in worship than if they had gotten half the



THE TOP OF THE ROUND TABLE OF KING ARTHUR.

world, and ye have seen that they have lost their fathers and their mothers and all their kin and their wives and their children for to be of your fellowship."

"It is well seen by you," he said, "for since ye have departed from your mother ye have never found such fellowship as at the Round Table."

When Merlin had ordained the Round Table, he said, "By them which should be fellows of the Round Table the truth of the Sangreal should be well known."

So that it might not be overcome, it was founded in humility and patience; by these virtues was it to become known, and also by the chivalry which was at all times shown by the fraternity.

The Round Table was afterwards given by Uther Pendragon to King Leodegrance, the father of Guenever, and when King Arthur married Guenever it was given to King Arthur by King Leodegrance as a wedding present.

When King Arthur received it he ordained that when his fair fellowship of knights sat to meat their chairs should be high alike, their service equal, and none before or after his comrade. Thus no man could boast that he was exalted above his fellows, for all alike were gathered round the board.

The Round Table was placed in a round hall, where sat the King and Queen and all the Fellowship. The banners of the knights hung over their seats.

When the knights were seated they spake with each other as if they were brothers.

King Arthur sat at the head of this Order of Equality wherein the worth of every man depended upon his valour and his natural gifts. His seat at the Table did not imply any superiority over any of the other knights. He was subject to the same rules and laws as they, and his conduct as a knight was considered more important than his conduct as a king.

The dominant idea of the Order was the love of God and men and noble deeds.

In each place was carved in letters of gold the name of the knight who was entitled to sit there. This was a bond of union which held them together and made them realise that no knight could injure another knight without injuring himself, and on the contrary any good done for one was for the good of all.

There was one seat which was unoccupied. This was called the Siege Perilous, or void seat, and it represented the place of Judas at the Table of the Passion. The knights felt that their Fellowship could not be completed until the stain of this seat

had been removed. They considered this could only be accomplished by its being occupied by a man who had lived an absolutely pure life, and they believed that if anyone who was not worthy occupied the seat, some calamity would befall him. This proved to be true, and no one was able to sit there until Sir Galahad became a knight and occupied the seat without harm. This void seat stood as a silent reminder of the need for the spirit of unity and comradeship. Every knight who went on the Quest for the Sangreal had but one purpose in mind, which was to make himself perfect so that he might be the one to sit in that seat.

It was a Table symbolically connecting God with man. Being round, and thus without beginning or end, the outer edge of the Table symbolised the Eternity of God, and reminded them that the Equality of Man, the Unity of the Knights, the Comradeship of the Order, and its Singleness of Purpose, should also endure for ever.

The outer edge also represented the world, and the exact centre a point of concentration which symbolised God radiating equally in all directions. The space at the Table allotted to each knight narrowed towards the centre, where all the spaces joined, thus making a symbolic union between God and the knights. Being triangular in shape each space was also emblematical of the Trinity.

If the actual Sangreal had been discovered by any knight it would have been placed in the centre of the Table. This was the point from which the Fellowship and all it stood for radiated. When the knights were seated in Fellowship at the Table they had their faces turned towards the central symbol. They were free to go from this Table into the world and return as they desired, but they could not sit in Fellowship without looking towards the Centre.

The Table accompanied King Arthur to the special courts which he held at Pentecost, each year in a different part of the country, when the new knights took the oath of allegiance to him and the others renewed their vows at the Table, which was to them, therefore, of special significance in connection with their obligation.

It was a Table of real Fellowship, because each knight had to help and support every other knight if necessary and never to shame another knight.

All the spaces were exactly the same size. This symbolised the equality of all in the sight of God.

It was a Table of Service, from which the knights went out into the world to redress wrongs or help others, and having

completed their journey returned to it again until they started upon fresh adventures.

It therefore stood as a reminder to the knights of: God, King, Fellowship and Service.

11. ARTHUR FOUNDS THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

After he had received the Sword Excalibur and the Round Table had been given to him, King Arthur collected about him many noble knights, and in time founded "The Fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table." These knights banded themselves together to put the principles promulgated by King Arthur into practice, and later on they went upon a Quest, which is known as the Quest for the Sangreal.

There were three phases in the life of a Knight. The first was the time of preparation, when he lived in anticipation and hope of being made a knight and by some worthy, brave, or knightly deed endeavoured to win his golden spurs, which would entitle him to be knighted; the second, when as a knight he had to exercise all the knightly qualities; and the third, when he felt the call to higher things and went on that search which was known as the Quest for the Sangreal.

King Arthur stood at his throne when he invested his knights, who afterwards went to the Round Table to take their oath of Loyalty.

The method of making knights was this: all who desired to become Knights of the Round Table had to ask to be knighted, and if they were worthy of this privilege it was granted them.

Having been brought before the King, or the knight who was to perform the ceremony, they were charged as follows:

"God make you a good man and to fail not of beauty.

The Round Table was founded in patience and in humility and in meekness.

Thou art never to do outrageousness, nor murder, and always to flee treason, by no means to be cruel, and always to do ladies, damosels and gentlewomen succour.

Also to take no battles in a wrongful quarrel, for no law nor for no world's goods.

Thou shouldst be for all ladies and fight for their quarrels, and ever be courteous and never refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy, for a knight that is courteous and kind and gentle hath favour in every place.

Thou shouldst never hold a maiden or gentlewoman against her will.

Thou must keep thy word to all and not be feeble of good belief and faith.

Right must be defended against might and the distressed must be protected.

Thou must know good from evil and the vain glory of the world, because great pride and bobaunce maketh great sorrow.

Should anyone require ye of any quest so that it is not to thy shame, thou shouldst fulfil the desire.

Ever it is a worshipful knight's deed to help another worshipful knight when he seeth him in a great danger, for ever a worshipful man should be loath to see a worshipful man shamed, for it is only he that is of no worship and who fareth with cowardice that shall never show gentleness nor no manner of goodness when he seeth a man in any danger, but that always a good man will do ever to another man as he would be done to himself.

It should never be said that a sworn brother hath injured or slain another brother.

Thou shouldst not fail in these things: charity, abstinence and truth.

No knight shall win worship but if he be of worship himself and of good living and that loveth God and dreadeth God, and else he getteth no worship here be he ever so hardy.

An envious knight shall never win worship, but an it happeth an envious man once to win worship he shall be dishonoured twice therefor, and for this cause all men of worship hate an envious man and will show him no favour.

Do not, nor say not, anything that will in any way dishonour the fair name of Christian Knighthood, for only by stainless and honourable lives and not by prowess and courage shall the final goal be reached.

Therefore be a good knight, and so I pray to God so ye may be, and if ye be of prowess and of worthiness ye shall be a Knight of the Table Round."

Each candidate then knelt on his right knee and the King, or another knight, struck the candidate on the left shoulder with his sword, and so was he made a knight unto his life's end.

The act of striking the candidate with the sword signified that the person who performed the ceremony of Knighthood possessed the virtues of Faith, Purity, and Humility, and transmitted them to the person whom he knighted, the new

knight being expected to preserve them so that he could in his turn transmit them to others.

He was often presented with his sword on the occasion of his being knighted.

The highest honour one could aspire to in those days was to become a Knight of the Round Table, but this carried with it certain responsibilities which had to be observed.

A Knight of the Round Table was instructed in the rules that governed the conduct of knights and the laws of Chivalry.

He agreed to act in accordance with the following duties of a knight—

To love God and men and noble deeds, and to defend at the expense of his life if needs be the honour and chastity of virgin and matron.

To be loyal to the King

To live a pure and stainless life.

To never shame his oath or his blood.

To defend the right against might.

To practise courtesy.

To protect the poor and distressed and to exert his strength and power not for selfish ends but in the service of others, especially for those who were weak and oppressed and therefore could not help or defend themselves.

To pursue infidels.

To be loyal to his friends.

To have a keen sense of truth and of honour.

To give food and shelter to another knight.

To never shame his given word.

To maintain his honour in every perilous adventure.

To learn to obey no less than to command.

To despise the allurements of ease and safety.

To endeavour to put right any wrong he saw being performed, and to respond willingly to any call for service or assistance on behalf of any worthy cause.

To destroy tyranny.

To help others and to do ever to another as he would be done to himself.

To live in fellowship with all.

He took his oath to obey these Rules at the Round Table, and then Arthur gave him a Badge, upon which was the Emblem of a Knight. This was worn so that each might know the others. This Badge had upon it a representation of a Golden Cross, a Red Dragon, and the Top of the Round Table.

The three main principles which the knights had to observe were known as the three loyalties, and as loyalty is the root of all virtues to the extent that from it order is evolved, so these three, when united, formed the Ideal of Chivalry. The Badge represented that Ideal.

Their loyalty to God was represented by the Cross. This had to manifest itself inwardly in their striving to be perfect, and outwardly by their performing acts of service to others; their loyalty to the King was represented by the Red Dragon of King Arthur, to whom all the knights vowed to be loyal; and their loyalty to their fellow men was represented by the Top of the Round Table, which called their attention to the Fellowship to which they all belonged and the duties in connection with it, to which they had agreed to adhere.

At the time of King Arthur the Emblem as a whole was also symbolical of his Kingship—Britain being carried or supported by his people who held the Cross on high and at the same time were supported by it.

The rules laid down by the King had to be put into practice by the knights as they travelled from place to place. If they were called upon for assistance they had to give it, or if they came across a case where a wrong was being done they had to put it right even at the risk of their own lives.

They had to see that no one was shamed without reason, and, above all, they were to have no quarrel with any other Knight of the Round Table wittingly. Ever they had to remember the principles laid down by King Arthur and live up to them in every way.

When the knights were invested they had plain shields, but when they had performed some deed worth recording they were allowed to blazon this upon their shield in such a manner that others could understand the meaning of the emblem.

Upon the Shield of Sir Galahad, the perfect knight, is the emblem of perfection. It represents the Blood, the Cross, and the Purity of Christ.

Upon the Shield of Sir Percivale is an emblem of sympathy. His shield was made in remembrance of the heart of the Roman soldier, beating with sympathy when he took pity upon the Saviour dying upon the Cross. Sympathy has the miraculous power of healing, and Sir Percivale had the virtue of sympathy to a marked degree.

As the faces of the knights were covered when they were fully armed they thus became known by their deeds rather than by their faces.

12. ARTHUR LOSES HIS SCABBARD

Shortly after the founding of the Order of the Knights of the Round Table, King Arthur began to feel the loss of the first of his kingly virtues—his Purity. Malory places this fact on record in the story of his encounter with Sir Accolan.

The sister of Arthur, Morgan le Fay, in an endeavour to weaken him further, stole his Sword, Excalibur and its scabbard, and gave them to Sir Accolan. Arthur fought a desperate battle with him, but had to use an inferior weapon, which broke. He retained, however, the pommel and the sure handles, fought with these, and as he refused to give up, although sorely pressed, his Sword and scabbard were miraculously returned to him and he was able to defeat his enemy.

Morgan le Fay again stole his scabbard, but not his Sword, for when she tried to get this she found Arthur was holding it so tightly that she dared not try to get it from him.

She threw the scabbard into a lake, from which it was never recovered.

Thus Arthur by a supreme effort retained his Faith, represented by the Sword, and cherished the fact that he had done so, but the scabbard, the emblem of his Purity, was lost for ever.

The intention of this story is to show the courage of King Arthur at that period of his career and his desire to carry out the duties of a King.

The shadow of his impending fate must have been in his mind, but he still continued the work of the Fellowship, exhorting the knights, remaining the centre of the Fellowship, spreading the principles he had charged all the knights to obey and fighting against great odds to do so. He was aware he had lost one of the ideals which qualified him to be a King, but was determined to retain the others.

The incident of his Sword being returned to him was to show that those who hold on at all costs to their Faith will get help from an outside source to enable them to do so.

We are now at a turning point in the symbolic story.



THE
KNIGHTING
OF GALAHAD
BY SIR
LAUNCELOT.

PART II

SIR GALAHAD

1. THE KNIGHTING OF GALAHAD

SIR GALAHAD was the son of Sir Launcelot du Lake and Elaine, the daughter of King Pellès. He was brought up by his mother at her father's Court whilst very young; afterwards, until he was fifteen years of age, he lived with his father and mother at the Castle of Bliant, otherwise known as the Joyous Isle.

Sir Launcelot then returned to the Court of King Arthur, but on the vigil of Pentecost following his return, when all the Fellowship of the Round Table had heard their service and the tables were set ready to the meat, there entered the hall a fair gentlewoman on horseback, who had ridden full fast.

She alit, and came before the King and saluted him.

"Damosel, God bless thee," said the King.

"Sir," said she, "say me where Sir Launcelot is."

"Yonder ye may see him," said the King.

Then she went to Sir Launcelot and required him to go with her to a forest, but would not state the reason for which she desired him to go.

Sir Launcelot departed with the gentlewoman and rode until he came into a great valley in the midst of a forest, where he saw an abbey of nuns. The gates of the abbey were opened and Sir Launcelot was made welcome. He was taken to a room wherein he found two of his cousins, Sir Lionel and Sir Bors, who showed great joy at his coming.

As they were talking together there came into the room twelve nuns, bringing with them Galahad. "Sir," they all said, "we bring you here this child and we pray of you to make him a knight, for of a more worthier man's hand may he not receive the order of knighthood."

Then said Sir Launcelot, "Cometh this desire of himself?"

The nuns and also Galahad replied, "Yea."

Then Sir Launcelot promised that he should be knighted on the morrow at the reverence of the High Feast.

And on the morn, at the hour of prime, Sir Launcelot made Galahad a knight at his desire, and said, "God make you a good man, for of beauty faileth you not as any that liveth."

2. THE COMING OF SIR GALAHAD TO THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR

After he had been knighted his father asked him to go with him to the Court of King Arthur, but the lad refused to go; so Sir Launcelot, with Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, returned without him.

When they arrived at the Court the King and Queen had gone to the Minster to hear their service, and on their return it was found that the names of the knights who were entitled to sit at the Round Table had been miraculously inscribed in letters of gold in the places where they should sit, thus proving the pleasure God took in the institution of the Round Table.

There was one place, however, where there was no name, but instead these words were written: "Four hundred winters and four and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled." Then they all said, "This is a marvellous thing, for this is the Feast of Pentecost after the four hundred and four and fifty year." It was decided to cover the letters until he who ought to achieve the adventure should come.

As they stood speaking a squire entered and said unto the King, "Sir, I bring you marvellous tidings. There is a large stone floating in the river and therein is sticking a sword."

The King said, "I will see that marvel." So all his knights went with him and there they saw the stone which was of red marble; therein was stuck a fair rich sword, and in the pommel thereof were precious stones wrought into letters, which read: "Never shall man take me hence, but only he by whose side I ought to hang, and he shall be the best knight in the world."

When the King saw these words he suggested that the sword should belong to Sir Launcelot, for he was the best knight in the world. But Sir Launcelot answered, "It is certainly not my sword, nor have I the hardiness to set my hand to it, for he who tries to take the sword and faileth of it shall receive a wound by it that he shall not be whole long after."

"Now, fair nephew," said the King unto Sir Gawaine, "essay ye, for my love." "Sir," he said, "save your good grace I shall not do that." "Sir," said the King, "essay to take the sword and at my commandment." "Sir," said Gawaine, "your commandment I will obey." And therewith



THE ENTRANCE OF SIR GALAHAD TO THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR.

he took up the sword by the handles, but he might not stir it. "I thank you," said the King to Sir Gawaine, "My lord Sir Gawaine," said Sir Launcelot, "now wit ye well this sword shall touch you so sore that ye shall will ye had never set your hand thereto for the best castle of this realm." "Sir," he said, "I might not withsay mine uncle's will and commandment." But when the King heard this he repented it much, and said unto Sir Percivale that he should essay, for his love. And he said, "Gladly, for to bear Sir Gawaine fellowship." And therewith he set his hand on the sword and drew it strongly, but he might not move it.

At various times different writers have made some particular knight the hero of the adventure of the Sangreal. In turn Gawaine, Launcelot, and Percivale have been considered as the knight who achieved the Quest. On each occasion when an alteration has been made, the standard required of the new knight was a higher one than for the previous one, until the perfect knight, Sir Galahad, was reached.

This episode describes the test by which Galahad was proved to be superior to the other knights mentioned in connection with the achievement of the Sangreal.

Sir Launcelot refused to try, Sir Gawaine only did so at the command of the King, and Sir Percivale tried for the love of his brother knight.

All failed except Sir Galahad, who easily performed the task.

The King and all his knights went into the Court and were served at their meal, all the places at the table being filled save only one called the Siege Perilous, this being the seat whereon was inscribed the writing instead of the name of a knight.

Sir Launcelot then foretold that upon that very day the adventures of the Sangreal, or Holy Vessel, would begin.

Suddenly all the doors and windows shut by themselves and it became dark in the palace. And there came in a stranger, an old man, clothed in white, and he brought with him a young knight in red arms, without sword or shield, save a scabbard hanging by his side. The look on his face showed that his purpose in life was well known to him and that he intended to fulfil it. Then the old man said unto King Arthur, "Sir, I bring here a young knight, who is of king's lineage, and of the kindred of Joseph of Aramathie, whereby the marvels of this Court shall be fully accomplished."

The King replied, "Sir, ye be right welcome, and the young knight with you."

Then the old man made the young man to unarm him, and he was in a coat of red sendel and bare a mantle upon his shoulder that was furred with ermine. And the old knight said to the young knight. "Sir, follow me." And anon he led him unto the Siege Perilous and lifted up the cloth and found these words in place of those that had previously been there: "Here ought to sit Sir Galahad."

"Sir," said the old man, "know ye well that place is yours." And he set him down surely in the seat.

The old man then departed, whilst all the Knights of the Round Table marvelled greatly of Sir Galahad that had durst sit in the Siege Perilous. They said, "This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be achieved."

Then said King Arthur unto Galahad, "Sir, ye be welcome, for ye shall move many good knights to the Quest of the Sangreal, and ye shall achieve that never knights might bring to an end."

3. THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE SANGREAL TO SIR GALAHAD

Queen Guenever desired to see Sir Galahad, and he was brought to her; and then together, the King, the Queen, and all the knights went to the river where the stone was still floating on the water. Sir Galahad lightly drew the sword from the stone and put it into his scabbard.

And the King gave thanks to God and said, "Sir, a shield God shall send you. I am sure that at this Quest of the Sangreal shall all ye of the Table Round depart and never shall I see you again whole together. Therefore I will see you tomorrow joust and tourney, that after your death men may speak of it that such good knights were wholly together such a day." And on the morrow Sir Galahad dressed him in middes of the meadow and surmounted all other knights save twain, that was Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale.

After the tourney was over they all went to supper and every knight sat in his own place.

And they heard the cracking and crying of thunder and there entered in the room a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost.

No knight might speak one word a great while, and they looked every man on other as if they had been dumb.

Then there entered the Sangreal, but none might see it as it was covered with white samite. And the hall was filled with good odours and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in the world.

And then the Holy Vessel departed suddenly. Then had they all breath to speak.

4. THE DEPARTURE OF THE KNIGHTS ON THE QUEST

"Now," said Sir Gawaine, "we have not this day seen the Sangreal, but I shall labour in the Quest and shall never return to the Court until I have seen it more openly than it hath been seen here."

When they of the Round Table heard Sir Gawaine say so, many arose and made such avows as he had made.

King Arthur was grieved at this, for he knew that many of the knights would die in the Quest, that he would never meet them any more in this world, and that this meant the departition of the Fellowship which he loved so well.

"Alas!" said the King, "ye have nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made; for through you ye have bereft me the fairest fellowship and the truest of knight-hood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world. I have loved them as well as my life."

Tears filled his eyes, and Sir Launcelot tried to comfort him.

"Ah, Launcelot," said the King, "the great love that I have had unto you all the days of my life maketh me to say such doleful words; for never Christian King had never so many worthy men at his Table as I have had this day at the Round Table, and that is my great sorrow."

And on the next day the knights all went to the Minster to hear their service, and they then put on their helms and departed, each knight taking the way that him liked best.

This poetic narrative may be thus transposed into modern language.

Galahad was brought up as a young man under the influence of his parents, and amongst people with religious ideas.

He had determined what his purpose in life should be.

The reference to his having found the scabbard left in a difficult place by Merlin means that he had sought for those things that would help him to fulfil his desire.

At the early age of fifteen he begged to be knighted and had enough confidence to go to the Court of King Arthur without his father.

The call came to him at the time of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit manifested to the Apostles at Whitsuntide appeared like flames of fire, and in token of this Galahad is depicted as wearing red armour.

In the meantime, at the Court of King Arthur, there was a feeling that something of importance was about to happen. It was a time of expectation.

A sword, which was intended to be used as a test, was discovered.

Sir Launcelot refused to make the test. In this connection it is interesting to remember that Sir Launcelot never tried to handle any sword as a test; or, in other words, he would not subject himself to any examination which was to determine whether he was in possession of the necessary virtues to enable him to hold a position of authority. His pride would not allow him to hold the handle of Humility.

The story reads, "all the doors were shut, the place was dark," which is a way of expressing there was a darkness in the minds of all as to what might be going to happen. Then Galahad entered and was placed in the Siege Perilous. His purity was such that the power of evil attached to the void seat could not harm him.

The story continues, "He stood the test of the sword easily," meaning, he possessed all the virtues; "thunder is heard," meaning that it was as if a loud voice was speaking to everyone; "the room becomes very bright," meaning that the position became very clear to them all.

"The knights were dumb," they were at a loss for words; "the Sangreal came, covered with white samite," they saw and felt that all the good things of the earth were theirs; "it departed, they all had breath to speak," then they recovered from their amazement; "all desired to go on the Quest," and with one accord decided in favour of spiritual instead of earthly things.

5. THE QUEST OF THE SANGREAL

Before Merlin made the Round Table, men asked him how they might best do to achieve the Sangreal. Then he said that there should be one who should achieve it and he should be chaste. They that heard Merlin say so said unto him, "If there shall be such a knight thou shouldst ordain a siege that no man should sit in it but he only that shall pass all other knights." Then Merlin answered that he would do so. And then he made the Siege Perilous, so that the perfect knight should be known.

The knights who desired to go on the Quest were told "that the Sangreal may not be seen but if it be by a perfect man," and also "that the Sangreal may not be achieved but by virtuous living."

When they went on the Quest they—

travelled alone or in pairs,
went for a year and a day,
abstained from any excess of meat or drink,
went out into the world on their ordinary daily vocation as knights,
sought for themselves,
took their own way,
prayed daily, and
when they came back they told their adventures to all
the knights assembled.

While on the Quest they had to pass severe tests, and if they failed they were debarred from proceeding,

they had to face great perils, even death,
to resist worldly temptations, and
to make enquiries concerning the Sangreal.

They were told that if they failed in the latter the country they were in would languish, but that if they remembered to enquire, then the country would prosper and the people would bless them.

Ladies were not allowed to accompany the knights on the Quest.

It was reported that Joseph of Aramathie had brought the Sangreal over to Britain, that it was in existence somewhere,

and that it might be discovered by a Knight of the Round Table.

The description of it was not always the same, but the power attributed to it was generally the same, although there were two meanings in the minds of those who went in search of it.

It was described as something which brought to those who had it in their possession all the good things of life, which would also bring great happiness to the country where it was to be found, and was in itself the source of life.

Those who considered material life as the most important thing regarded the Quest as a search for something which would supply their mortal wants, foods and sweet things, which would heal them if they were injured or sick, and which if found would give them definite and personal knowledge of the secret of physical life. The knights who thought this all failed.

Those who could penetrate the outer symbolism and arrive at the inner or hidden meaning considered the Quest the way of spiritual attainment that would enable them to achieve an intimate and personal contact with the Divine source of life. The Sangreal to them was considered the secret thing of Jesu Christ, the Source and Food of Spiritual Life, that is, God Himself.

They desired that the Glory of the Sangreal should be revealed to them, and thought it possible that if they searched sufficiently, the Great Knight, God, would be made known to them.

But although many knights realised this true meaning of the Quest, only one achieved the Sangreal, and that was Sir Galahad; the others failed because some early sin made them unworthy, or because they could not resist the temptations which assailed them whilst on their Quest, or because they could not stand the tests upon which their success on the Quest depended. The victory of Sir Galahad was that of a man who, although born of earthly parents and therefore liable to sin, never yielded to evil, and when he sat in the Siege Perilous, or void seat, and no harm came to him, the knights knew he was the one who would make their Fellowship complete.

The Round Table was closely connected with the Quest of the Sangreal, for it had been prophesied that the Sangreal would be achieved by a Knight of the Round Table.

6. SIR GALAHAD OBTAINS HIS SHIELD

Sir Galahad rode for four days without any adventure. He then came to a white abbey wherein hung a white shield, in the middes of which was a red cross, which shield was made for King Evelake by Joseph, the son of Joseph of Aramathie, in the name of Him Who died upon the Cross. This shield was given to Sir Galahad by a white knight, in whose charge it had been placed until Galahad should claim it.

This shield symbolically represented the Blood of Christ, the Purity of Christ, and the Cross of Christ, and was an emblem of perfection.

That the abbey itself was white, and also the armour and horse of the knight who guarded the shield, suggests the intention of keeping it in purity.

7. THE QUEST OF SIR GALAHAD

A monk then led Sir Galahad to a tomb in a churchyard where there was such a noise that whoever heard it would verily nigh be mad.

Sir Galahad was told that it was thought to be a fiend, and he asked to be led nearer the tomb. He lifted up the stone and there came forth so foul a smoke, and afterwards the foulest fiend that ever had the likeness of a man leapt out.

Then Sir Galahad heard a voice say, "Galahad, I see about thee so many angels that my power may not dare thee."

And a good man came and sat by Galahad and said, "I shall tell you what ye saw in the tomb, for that body betokeneth the hardship and the great sin our Lord found in the world. There was such wretchedness that the father loved not the son nor the son loved not the father, and the sins of us were so great that well nigh all was wickedness. And only by clean living shall that wickedness be overcome. . . ."

"Truly," said Galahad, "I believe you right well."

On the morrow he journeyed with his knight and they came to a cross which departed two ways. And in that cross were written these words: "Knights Errant, see here two ways. One on thy right hand, from which ye shall not go out of again but if ye be a good man and a worthy knight, and the other on thy left hand where ye shall not lightly win prowess and where ye shall soon be tried."

"Sir," said the knight, "suffer me to take the way on the left hand, for there I shall well prove my strength."

"It were better," said Sir Galahad, "ye rode not that way."

"Nay, my lord," said the knight, "I pray ye let me have that adventure."

"Take it in God's Name," said Sir Galahad, and so they parted.

The knight who had taken the left-hand way had ridden but a short distance when he saw in the boughs of a tree a crown of gold, which he took, and rode his way with it. And anon he saw a knight come riding after him that said, "Set down that crown and defend you." And he struck him through the side so that he fell to the earth. And Sir Galahad, by chance hearing the noise, came and rescued his knight from death at the hands of the strange knight and another who was in ambush.

Then there came to him a monk who explained that the way on the right hand betokened the highway of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the way of a good true liver, and the way on the left hand betokened the way of sinners and unbelievers. And that the two knights who were defeated by Sir Galahad represented the two deadly sins, pride and covetousness, which could not withstand him but were overcome by him through his being without deadly sin.

And Sir Galahad journeyed until he came unto a mountain, where he found an old chapel, and there he kneeled before the altar, and besought God of wholesome counsel. And as he prayed, he heard a voice that said, "Go to the Castle of Maidens, and there do thou away the wicked customs." When Sir Galahad heard this he thanked God and rode until he came to the castle, where he met a man of great age who counselled him to turn back again. "Sir," said Sir Galahad, "I come for to destroy the wicked customs of this castle."

Anon there came from the castle seven knights, and all were brethren. When they saw Sir Galahad they cried, "Knight, keep thee, for we assure thee nothing but death." But Sir Galahad smote the foremost to the earth with his spear and drew his sword and set about them so hard that it was marvel to see. Then he entered the castle and delivered the maidens.

And a hermit explained that the Castle of Maidens betokeneth the good souls that were in prison before the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. And the seven knights betoken the seven deadly sins that reigned that time in the world. And he

likened Sir Galahad to the Son of the High Father Who bought all the souls out of thrall.

And as he was riding, Sir Galahad saw a knight being attacked by twenty other knights, and when he saw all those knights upon one knight he cried, "Save me that knight's life." And he dressed him as fast as his horse might drive, with his spear in the rest, and smote the foremost horse and man to the earth. And when his spear was broken he set his hand to his sword and smote on the right hand and on the left hand that it was marvel to see, and at every stroke he smote one down until those who were left fled to a thick forest. And he went to the knight who had been attacked and found it was Sir Percivale. And Sir Percivale knew it was Sir Galahad and was much rejoiced thereby.

After Sir Galahad had rescued Sir Percivale from the twenty knights he rode many journeys and found many adventures, and then took his way to the sea, where he found a ship in which were Sir Bors and Sir Percivale. He went on board and the two knights received him with great joy. Then the wind rose and drove them through the water at a great pace.

And on the ship they found written these words: "Thou man, which shalt enter into this ship, beware thou be in steadfast belief, for I am Faith, and therefore beware how thou enterest, for an thou fail I shall not help thee."

And the ship was so marvellously fair and rich that they wondered, and in the middle of the ship was a fair bed, upon which was a crown of silk, and at the foot of the bed was a sword with a pommel of stone. And Sir Percivale essayed to draw the sword from its sheath, but he failed. Sir Bors also tried, and failed. Then Sir Galahad beheld the sword and saw letters like blood that said: "Who shall draw me out of my sheath shall never fail of shame of his body or be wounded to the death." And Sir Galahad gripped the sword and drew it and girded it about him.

And anon the wind drove the ship at a great pace until they reached the port. As they landed they heard a horn blow, and a gentlewoman came to them and asked them of whence they were; and they told her. "Fair lords," she said, "turn again if ye may, for ye be come to your death."

As they stood talking there came knights well armed who bade them yield or else die. Sir Percivale smote the foremost to the earth and took his horse and mounted thereon, and the same did Sir Galahad and Sir Bors. When they were horsed they began to set about them until the knights fled to a fortress,

which they entered, followed by the three knights, who with their swords slew all who stood in their way.

But when they saw the great number they had slain they were ashamed. "Truly," said Sir Bors, "if the Lord had loved them He would not have given us power to have slain them thus."

"Say ye not so," said Sir Galahad, "for if they misdid against God the vengeance is not ours, but to Him which has power thereof."

And there came out of a chamber a good man which was a priest and bare God's body in a cup. And when he saw them that lay dead in the hall he was abashed, and Sir Galahad did off his helm and kneeled down, and so did Sir Percivale and Sir Bors. Then asked the good man, "How were they slain so suddenly?" And they told it him. "Truly," said the good man, "ye might live as long as the world might endure and never might do as great an alms deed as this."

"Sir," said Sir Galahad, "I repent me much, inasmuch as they were christened." "Nay, repent you not," said he, "for they were not christened. They did great wrongs and untruths and forbade that Our Lord's service might be served or said. And this may ye wit, that Our Lord is not displeased with your deeds."

The three knights then rode on until they came to a valley, and thereby was an hermitage where a good man dwelled. And they all entered the chapel and heard mass.

"Now," said Sir Percivale to Sir Galahad, "we must depart, so pray we Our Lord that we meet again in short time." And they kissed together and wept at this parting.

Sir Galahad then met his father, Sir Launcelot, and lived with him for half a year, and they served God daily and nightly with all their power until Sir Galahad went alone on the Quest of the Sangreal.

Sir Galahad rode many journeys in vain search until he again met Sir Percivale and Sir Bors, and they arrived at the castle of King Pelles, who bade them welcome.

The son of King Pelles brought to them a sword which was broken at the handle. Sir Bors tried to mend it, but was unable to do so, and Sir Percivale tried also, but he had no more power than Sir Bors. Then Sir Galahad took the pieces and set them together, and they were as if they had never been apart.

The meaning of this is that the handle of a sword broken from the blade is a representation of the Hebrew

Cross, the Tau, whilst the handle with the blade is a representation of the Christian Cross. The story that Sir Galahad was the only knight who could mend the sword and make it into a Christian Cross was to show that he was the only knight of the three who was a true Christian.

8. THE SECOND APPEARANCE OF THE SANGREAL TO SIR GALAHAD

And whilst they were in the castle, it therewithal beseemed them that there came a man and four angels from heaven, and they heard the chamber door open and there they saw more angels and all the vessels for the mass.

And the priest went to Galahad and kissed him. "Now," said he, "ye shall be fed at the table with that which never knights tasted." And with that he vanished away.

And they set them at the table with great dread. And they saw a figure like a man come out of the Holy Vessel, who said, "My knights, my servants, and my true children, which be come out of deadly life into spiritual life, I will no longer hide me from thee, but ye shall see now a part of my secrets." Then he took the Holy Vessel and came to Galahad, and he kneeled down and there he received his Saviour, and after him so received all his fellows.

Then said he to Galahad, "Son, wottest thou what I hold betwixt my hands."

"Nay," said he, "but if ye will tell me."

"This is," said he, "the holy dish wherein I ate the lamb on Sher-Thursday. And now hast thou seen that thou most desired to see, but yet hast thou not seen it so openly as thou shalt see it in the City of Sarras in the spiritual place. Therefore take a ship and depart thence." And he gave them his blessing and vanished away.

And they went to the ship and found in the middes the table of silver and the Sangreal, which was covered with red samite. They made great reverence thereto, and Galahad fell in his prayer long time to Our Lord; that at what time he asked, that he should pass out of this world.

So much he prayed till a voice said to him, "Galahad, thou shalt have thy request, and when thou asketh the death of thy body thou shalt have it, and then shalt thou find the life of the soul."

9. THE DEATH OF SIR GALAHAD

They soon arrived at the land of Sarra, and took the table of silver out of the ship.

And when the King of the city saw them with it he asked them of whence they were, and what thing it was that they had brought upon the table of silver. And when they told him, he took them and put them into prison. At the end of a year the King died, and they were released, and all the people desired that Galahad should be King. He then took the table to his palace and set it up and hylled the holy vessel with gold and precious stones.

And every day the three knights would come afore the Holy Vessel and make their prayers.

And one day when the sacrament of the mass was done, the bishop called Galahad and said to him, "Come forth, the servant of Jesu Christ, and thou shalt see that thou hast much desired to see."

And Galahad held up his hands towards heaven and said, "Lord, I thank Thee, for now I see that that hath been my desire many a day. Now, blessed Lord, would I not longer live, if it might please Thee, Lord."

And therewith the good man took Our Lord's Body betwixt his hands, and proffered it to Galahad, and he received it right gladly and meekly.

And when this was over, Galahad went to Percivale and kissed him, and commended him to God; and so he went to Sir Bors and kissed him, and commended him to God, and said, "Fair lords, salute me to my lord Sir Launcelot, my father, and as soon as ye see him, bid him remember of this unstable world."

And therewith he kneeled down tofore the table and made his prayer and then suddenly his soul departed to Jesu Christ, and a great multitude of angels bare his soul up to heaven.

And Sir Percivale and Sir Bors saw come from heaven an hand, but they saw not the body, and it took the Holy Vessel and bare it to heaven also.

And they made as much sorrow as ever did two men when they saw Sir Galahad dead.

And Sir Bors journeyed to the Court of King Arthur and gave the message of Sir Galahad to Sir Launcelot, who said, "I trust to God his prayer shall avail me."

And King Arthur caused his clerks to come before him that they should chronicle the adventures of these good knights and how Sir Galahad had achieved the Sangreal.



SIR GALAHAD ACHIEVES THE SANGREAL.

The illustration shows Sir Galahad at the moment when having seen the Sangreal he fell into an ecstasy of joy in which he desired to die, and his request was granted unto him. His eyes are turned upwards as if gazing directly into heaven. The Sangreal is now but a symbol to him. He is looking beyond this, to the vision of Divine Loveliness. There is a joyful look on the face of the priest, the angels are glad, and death has no terrors to Sir Galahad. Sir Bors and Sir Percivale are amazed and cannot understand what is taking place.

The story of the Quest of Sir Galahad shows that having armed himself with the virtues of the sword, Faith, Purity, and Humility, he was given a shield upon which was the emblem of Christ, for the purpose of protection. It symbolically explains that whilst on the Quest he could not be harmed by evil, he overcame pride and covetousness, his judgment was correct in his choice of the path to be taken, he fought against evil customs, he overcame the seven deadly sins, he was not afraid of his belief, and he firmly gripped the sword of Faith and made a determined onslaught against those who were unbelievers.

On his arrival at the Court of King Arthur many saw the Sangreal covered with white samite; later, a few, including Sir Galahad, were able to see it covered with red samite; but only Sir Galahad was allowed to see it openly. He then died in peace.

PART III

SIR LAUNCELOT

1. THE QUEST OF SIR LAUNCELOT

SIR LAUNCELOT was amongst the knights who started on the Quest of the Sangreal.

King Arthur was sad to see them all go, for he knew many of them would return to him no more. Queen Guenever was especially grieved at the departure of Sir Launcelot. King Arthur prayed with them all, and then they departed, with weeping and with cheers, each to take the way that him liked best.

Sir Launcelot rode through a wild forest, and at last came to a place where stood a stone Cross and near by an old chapel. He dismounted, and went to the chapel door, which was broken. On looking in he saw an altar, arrayed with cloth of silk, upon which was a candlestick of silver which bore six candles. He could find no place to enter the chapel, and so he lay down to sleep beside the Cross.

And in his sleep he saw come two palfreys fair and white, bearing a litter carrying a sick knight, and they stopped near the Cross. And he heard the knight say, "O sweet Lord, when shall the Holy Vessel come by me by which I shall be blessed? and when shall this sorrow leave me, for I have endured thus long for a little fault?"

And then he saw the candlestick with the six candles come towards the Cross, although he saw not anyone who brought it. And also there came a table of silver and the Holy Vessel of the Sangreal.

And the sick man held up both his hands and fell on his knees and said, "Fair sweet Lord, take heed unto me that I may be cured of my malady." And therewith on his hands and knees he went to the Holy Vessel and kissed it, and anon he was cured, and he then said, "Lord God, I thank Thee, for I am now healed."

And the Holy Vessel went unto the chapel with the chandelier and the light. Then the sick man kissed the Cross whereby Sir Launcelot was sleeping. And he marvelled that Sir Launcelot could sleep so near the Holy Vessel. "I dare say,"

he said, "that he dwelleth in some deadly sin whereof he has never confessed." And when he was ready to go he took with him Sir Launcelot's helm and his sword and his horse.

Then Sir Launcelot waked and bethought him of what he had seen, and wondered if it were dreams or not. And he heard a voice that said, "Sir Launcelot, more harder than is the stone, and more bitter than is the wood, and more naked and barer than is the leaf of the fig tree, therefore go thou from hence, and withdraw thee from this holy place."

Sir Launcelot was very sad at hearing these words, and cursed the time he was born, for he thought he should never have worship more. He then discovered that his horse, helm and sword had been taken from him. "My sin and my wickedness," he said, "have brought me great dishonour. For when I sought worldly adventures for worldly desires I ever achieved them, and had the better in every place, and never was I disturbed in any quarrel, were it right or wrong. But now I take upon me the adventure of holy things, and now I see and understand that my old sin hindereth me and shameth me, so that I have no power to speak nor stir when the Holy Vessel appeared to me." Thus he sorrowed all the night, feeling that God was displeased with him.

In the morning he departed from the Cross on foot, until he came to a high hill, and there he found an hermitage, with the hermit going to mass. Sir Launcelot kneeled down and cried to the Lord for mercy for his wicked works. Afterwards he talked to the hermit and told him who he was, and spoke of his troubles and of the shame he felt.

"Sir," said the hermit, "ye ought to thank God more than any knight living, for he has caused you to have more worldly worship than any knight that now liveth. For your presumption ye were not permitted to see the Sangreal, for this will not appear where sinners are, except to their great hurt and their great shame. There is no knight living now that ought to give God so great thanks as ye. For He hath given you beauty, seemliness and great strength above all other knights, and therefore ye are more beholding unto God than any other man, to love Him, and to dread Him, for your strength and manhood will little avail an God be against you."

Sir Launcelot wept at these words.

"Sir," said the hermit, "hide none of your sin from me."

Sir Launcelot then told the hermit that he had loved the Queen unmeasurably, that all the great deeds he had done had been for the most part for her sake, that he would battle for her, not caring whether the cause was right or wrong, that never

did he battle all only for God's sake, but for to win worship and to cause himself to be the better beloved, and that little or naught had he thanked God for anything he had done.

He then asked the hermit to counsel him. "I will counsel you," said the hermit, "if you will ensure me that ye will never come in that Queen's fellowship as much as ye may forbear." Sir Launcelot promised the hermit, and the good man continued, "Look that your heart and your mouth accord and I shall ensure you ye shall have more worship than ever ye had. It seemeth that well God loveth you. Men may understand a stone is hard of kind, and some more than another, and this is to understand by thee, for thou wilt not leave thy sin for no goodness that God hath sent thee, therefore thou art more hard than any stone and never would be made soft by fire or by water, and for this reason the Holy Ghost may not enter into thee. Therefore take heed, for in all the world men shall not find one knight to whom God hath given so much of grace as He hath given you, for He hath given you fairness with seemliness, wit and discretion to know good from evil, prowess and hardiness and the opportunity all thy days to get the better of others wheresoever they came, and now Our Lord will suffer thee no longer, but that thou shalt know Him whether thou wilt or not.

"The voice called thee bitterer than wood, for where overmuch sin dwelleth there may be but little sweetness, wherefore art thou likened to an old rotten tree. Now have I showed thee why thou art harder than the stone and bitterer than the tree, and now will I show thee why thou art more naked and barer than the fig tree.

"It befel that Our Lord preached on Palm Sunday in Jerusalem and there He found in the people that all hardness was harboured in them, and there He found in all the town not one that would harbour Him. And He went without the room and found in the middle of the path a fig tree right fair and garnished with leaves, but fruit it had none. Then Our Lord cursed the fig tree that bare no fruit and compared the fig tree unto Jerusalem, that had leaves but no fruit. So thou, Sir Launcelot, hast no fruit, nor good will, nor good thought, and art fouled with sin."

"All you have said is true," replied Sir Launcelot, "and from henceforward I cast me by the grace of God never to be so wicked as I have been, but to follow knighthood and do feats of arms."

The hermit then blessed Sir Launcelot, prayed for him to

stay with him that day, and promised to find him a horse and helm and sword on the morrow.

Sir Launcelot stayed with him three days, and then departed and journeyed until he came to a little house near by a chapel. Beside the chapel he saw an old man all clothed in white, and he said to him, "God save you."

"God keep you," said the old man, "and make you a good knight."

Sir Launcelot alit from his horse and went into the chapel, and there he saw another old man in a white shirt of fine cloth, who was dead. The old man explained that the dead man was a man of religion, but that he had broken the oath of his order by wearing a linen shirt when he ought to have worn none but that of hair, and that although he had been living for over a hundred years, by this trespass he had not lived well.

Sir Launcelot stayed with the old man that night and they talked together of the Quest. The old man asked if he were Sir Launcelot du Lake, and on being told that that was so, he asked him what he sought. Sir Launcelot said he was in search of the Sangreal. The old man then said, "Seek it ye may well, but though it were here ye shall have no power to see it no more than a blind man should see a bright sword, and that is long on your sin and else ye were more abler than any man living." Sir Launcelot wept at hearing these words.

Then the old man asked him if he had confessed since he had entered upon the Quest of the Sangreal, and Sir Launcelot answered "Yes."

The next morning they buried the dead man, but before Sir Launcelot departed he asked the old man what he should do to accomplish the Quest.

"First," said the old man, "you must take this hair shirt which belonged to the holy man who has just died, and wear it next thy skin: then I charge you that ye eat no flesh as long as ye be on the Quest, nor ye shall drink no wine, and that ye hear mass daily."

So Sir Launcelot took the hair shirt and put it upon him and departed.

He rode into a forest where he met a gentlewoman riding upon a white palfrey, who addressed him, saying, "Sir Knight, whither ride ye?"

"I ride as fortune leadeth me," said Sir Launcelot.

"Ah, Sir Launcelot," said she, "I wot that adventure ye seek, for ye were aforetime nearer than ye be now and yet shall ye see it more openly than ever ye did, and that ye shall understand in short time."

Then Sir Launcelot commended her to God and rode until he came to a Cross, and he took that as his host for that night. And he made his prayers unto the Cross that he never fall in deadly sin again.

And he had a vision that there came a man afore him with a crown of gold on his head, who was followed by seven Kings and two knights. And these all worshipped the Cross, kneeling and holding their hands to the heavens. And they asked their Father of Heaven to come and visit them and yield to them each as they had deserved.

And it seemed to Sir Launcelot that an old man came down from heaven with a company of angels and gave to each of them his blessing and called them his servants. But to one of the knights he said, "I have lost all that I set in thee, for thou hast ruled thee against me as a warrior and used wrong wars with vain glory, more for the pleasure of the world than to please me, therefore thou shalt be confounded without thou yield me my treasure."

In the morning Sir Launcelot continued his journey and rode till night, when he met a hermit, with whom he rested that night.

"Sir," said the hermit, "of whence be ye?"

"I am of Arthur's Court and my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, that am in Quest of the Sangreal," said Sir Launcelot. And he told him of his vision and asked him if he could explain it to him.

"Lo," said the hermit, "of the seven Kings, the first was called Nappus, an holy man; the second, Nacien, and in him dwelt Our Lord Jesus Christ; the third was called Helias le Grose; and the fourth, Lisais; the fifth was called Jonas, who was the father of thy grandsire King Launcelot, who wedded the daughter of the King of Ireland, who was the sixth King, and of him came King Ban, thy father, the which was the last of the seven Kings. And by thee, Sir Launcelot, it signifieth that the angels said thou wert none of the seven fellowships. And the last was the ninth knight, and he was signified to pass all manner of earthly knights, and that is Sir Galahad, the which thou gat on King Pelles' daughter, and thou ought to thank God more than any other man living, for of a sinner living thou hast no peer in knighthood, nor ever shall be."

"Sir," said Sir Launcelot, "say ye that that good knight is my son. Meseemeth he should pray for me unto the High Father that I fail not to sin again."

"Trust thou well," said the hermit, "thou farest much better for his prayer, but the son shall not bear the wickedness of the father, nor the father that of the son, but each shall bear

his own burden. And therefore beseeke thou only God and He will help thee in all thy needs."

And then Sir Launcelot and the hermit went to supper and to bed, and the hair pricked Sir Launcelot's skin, which grieved him full sore, but he took it meekly and suffered the pain.

And on the morn he heard his mass and took his leave. And he rode into a forest until he came to a castle, and there he saw about five hundred knights riding on horseback, and there were two parties, one all on black horses and one party on white horses. At last those of the black horses were put to the worse, and so Sir Launcelot rushed to their assistance and did marvellous feats of arms. But those on the white horses overcame Sir Launcelot and bore him away a prisoner.

Sir Launcelot made great sorrow, for he said, "For never or now was I at tournament but I had the best, and now I am shamed. Now also am I sure that I am more sinfuller than ever I was."

And he laid him down to sleep. And then he thought there came an old man before him who said, "Launcelot of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore is the will turned so lightly toward thy deadly sin." And with this the old man vanished away.

And Sir Launcelot took his horse and rode until he came to a chapel where was a recluse, and all aloud she called, "Launcelot." He went to her, and she asked him what he was, and of what place, and where about he went to seek. And he told her of his vision and prayed her to tell him what it might mean.

"Launcelot," said she, "as long as ye were of earthly knighthood ye were the most marvellous man of the world and most adventurous. Now that ye be set among the knights of heavenly adventures ye have no marvel. At the tournament the knights on the black horses were those who had sinned, and those on the white horses, which betokeneth virginity, were those who chose chastity, and thus was the Quest begun in them. Then thou beheld the sinners and the good men, and when thou saw the sinners overcome thou inclinest to that party for pride of the world. All that must be left when on the Quest for the Sangreal, for in this Quest thou shalt have many fellows and thy betters. For thou art so feeble of good belief and trust that even when the knights of the white horses took thee to the forest and the Sangreal appeared to them thou didst not abide it, for thou wert so feeble of faith.

"The misadventure was that thou shouldst not know good from evil and vain glory of the world, the which is not worth a pear. For great pride thou madest great sorrow amongst the

white knights, and God was wroth with you, for God loveth no such deeds in this Quest.

"And this vision signifieth thou wert of evil faith and poor belief, the which will make thee to fall into the deep pit of hell if thou keep thee not. I have warned thee of thy vain glory and thy pride, and thou hast many times erred against thy Maker. Beware of everlasting pain, for of all earthly knights I have most pity of thee, for I know well thou hast not thy peer of any earthly sinful man." And she commended Sir Launcelot and he rode away.

And when he had arrived at the water of Mortoise he laid him down to sleep and took the adventure that God would send him. And when he was asleep he heard a voice which said, "Launcelot, arise, and take thine armour and enter into the first ship thou shalt find."

And Sir Launcelot went to the shore and there entered a ship and sailed for a month, then he landed in a foreign country. And there came a knight to him and asked him his name.

"Truly," said he, "my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake."

"Sir," said the knight, "then ye be welcome, for ye were the beginning of me in this world."

"Ah," said he, "are ye Galahad?"

"Yes, forsooth," said he, and so he knelt down and asked his blessing, and then took off his helm and kissed him. And there was great joy between them, but there is no tongue that can tell the joy that they made either of the other or for the friendly word spoken between kin. And they each told to the other their adventures and the marvels that had befallen them in many journeys since they left the Court of King Arthur. Sir Launcelot asked his son to show him his sword, which he had gotten from the ship, and he kissed the pommel, the hilt, and the scabbard.

And they went away together for half a year, and served God daily and nightly with all their power.

And on one day they arrived at the edge of a forest tofore a Cross, and they saw there a knight armed all in white and richly horsed, and he led in his right hand a white horse, and he saluted the two knights and said, "Sir Galahad, ye have been long enough with your father, start upon this horse and go where the adventures shall lead ye in the Quest of the Sangreal."

Then Sir Galahad went to his father and kissed him sweetly, and said, "Fair, sweet father, I shall see ye no more till I see the body of Jesu Christ."

"I pray you," said Launcelot, "to pray to the High Father that He hold me to His service."

And they heard a voice which said, "Think for to do well, for the one shall never see the other before the dreadful day of doom."

And Sir Launcelot said, "Galahad, since we must depart, and never see other again, I pray to the High Father to conserve me and you both."

"Sir," said Galahad, "no prayer availeth so much as yours."

And Galahad departed into the forest.

And Sir Launcelot came to a castle where there was a postern which opened to the sea. And there were two lions guarding the entrance. And Launcelot heard a voice which said "Launcelot, go into the castle and thou shalt see a great part of thy desire."

And Launcelot drew his sword and went towards the gate, but a dwarf came and struck the sword out of his hand.

Then the voice said, "O man of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore putteth thou more faith in thy harness than in thy Maker, for He might avail thee more than thy armour in whose service thou art set."

Then Launcelot said, "Father, Jesu Christ, I thank Thee of Thy great mercy that Thou reprovest me of my misdeed; now see I well that Ye hold me for Thy servant."

Then he took his sword and put it in his sheath, and made a cross on his forehead, and came to the lions and passed them without hurt, and entered into the castle.

And he found a chamber whereof the door was shut, and he set his hand thereto to have opened it, but he might not. Then he tried to force the door.

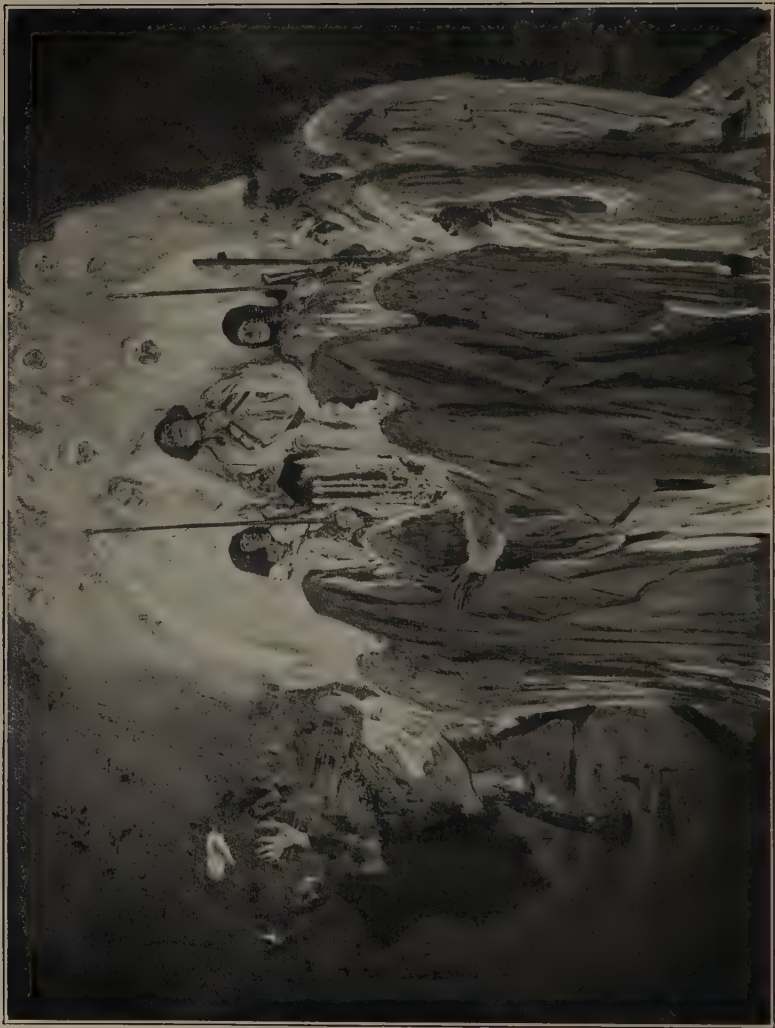
And he heard a voice which sang so sweetly that it seemed no earthly thing, and he thought the voice said, "Joy and honour be to the Father of Heaven." Then Launcelot kneeled down before the chamber, for he knew the Sangreal was within.

And he said, "Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, if ever I did thing that pleased Thee, Lord, for Thy pity despise me not for the sins done before that time, and show me something of that I seek."

And with that he saw the chamber door open, and there came out a great clearness, that the place was as bright as all the torches of the world had been there.

And he went to the chamber door and would have entered. And a voice said, "Flee, Launcelot, and enter not, for thou oughtest not to do it, and if thou enter thou shalt forethink it." Then he withdrew him back right heavy.

Then he looked into the chamber and saw a table of silver



SIR LAUNCELOT IS DENIED THE SIGHT OF THE SANGREAL.

and the Holy Vessel covered with red samite and many angels about it, whereof one held a candle of wax burning, and the other held a cross, and the ornaments of an altar. And before the Holy Vessel he saw a good man clothed as a priest, as if he was at the sacring of the mass. And it seemed to Sir Launcelot that above the priest's hands were three men, whereof the two put the youngest between the priest's hands; and so he lift it up right high, and it seemed to show so to the people. And Sir Launcelot thought the priest was so greatly charged of the figure that he would fall to the earth, and so he went to the door at a great pace and said, "Fair Father, Jesu Christ, take it not for a sin that I help the good man which has need of help."

And right so he entered the chamber and came toward the table of silver, and when he came nigh he felt a breath that him thought was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it burnt his eyes, and therewith he fell to the earth and had no power to rise, having lost the power of his body and his hearing and his seeing.

Then he felt many hands about him which bare him out of the chamber door and left him there seeming dead to all people.

The illustration represents the moment when Sir Launcelot was unable to move owing to the light which came from the Sangreal. It is as though he had arrived at the gates of heaven and was denied admission. His pride had prevented his understanding the way to achieve the Sangreal; he had had this repeatedly pointed out to him on his journey, but he seems always to have thought that he could overcome any difficulty, and that he was in some way different from other people.

He had now come face to face with something he could not understand. Had it been a body of knights, however many, who had tried to prevent him, he would have been able, by his great strength, to overcome them, but this was something intangible and unknown, against which he was powerless.

He lay in a swoon for four and twenty days, and on the twenty-fifth day he opened his eyes. And when he saw the folk about him he said, "Why have ye awaked me, for I was more at ease than I am now?"

And the people asked him what he had seen. "I have seen," said he, "so great marvels that no tongue can tell, and more

than any heart can think, and had not my son been here afore me, I had seen much more."

Then they told him he had laid there for four and twenty days and nights. And he thought it was punishment for the twenty-four years he had been a sinner.

And he looked about him and saw the hair shirt that he had borne for nigh a year, and he saw he had broken his promise to the hermit.

And the people asked him how it stood with him. And he said, "Forsooth, I am whole of body, thank the Lord, but for God's love tell me where I am." And they told him he was in the castle of Carbonek.

And a gentlewoman came and brought him some fine clothes, but he changed not into them, but put on the hair shirt again.

And the people said, "The Quest of the Sangreal is now achieved in you, that never shall ye see more of the Sangreal than ye have seen."

And Launcelot said, "I thank God of His great mercy that I have seen, for I suppose no man has lived better than I have done to achieve that I have done." And above the hair shirt he put a linen shirt, and after, a robe of scarlet, fresh and new.

And when he was thus arrayed the people knew him for Sir Launcelot, and they all said, "Sir Launcelot, is it you?"

And he replied, "Truly I am he."

And they carried the news to King Pelles, who told him the mother of Galahad, Elaine, was dead. And the heart of Sir Launcelot was heavy. And he remained there four days and then went out of the Court as fast as horse might, and so to the Court of King Arthur.

The Quest of Sir Launcelot was in some respects different from that of Sir Galahad. Sir Galahad received a shield, but Sir Launcelot was not so deserving nor so sincere, therefore he was not given that encouragement.

He slept whilst the Sangreal was near, and whilst he slept his horse and sword were taken from him.

He cursed himself when he was informed that he was unworthy.

He cried for mercy and was again told of his faults.

He admitted he had been at fault, promised to amend his ways, and was given his horse and sword again.

Once more was he told that unless he repented and set himself to ensure some discomfort, or, in other words, disciplined himself, it was hopeless for him to seek for the Sangreal.

He had a vision which made it clear to him that his past deeds had been wrong, and that unless he changed his conduct he would be confounded.

He then asked that Galahad might pray for him, but he was told that this could not help him, and that he must bear his own burdens.

When he saw the good knights fighting against the evil ones and defeating them, he sided with the evil knights without enquiring which was the right thing to do, and at their defeat he was taken prisoner.

He was again upbraided for his attitude.

He then met his son Galahad, and together they lived for a time, praying and learning the right things to do.

When he left Sir Galahad he was told that he would in part see what he desired.

He had so little Faith, however, that he tried to fight his way into the castle where the Holy Vessel was, and for this act his sword was struck out of his hand.

He replaced the sword in his scabbard, and was admitted into the outer chamber, but was told he must not proceed further.

His lack of humility and patience led him to force his way into the inner chamber, where he was repulsed, and left unconscious.

2. THE HOSPITALITY OF THE QUEEN

After the Quest was over, the knights who remained alive returned again to the Court of King Arthur.

Sir Launcelot desired to break off his intimate relations with Guenever, and for this reason she dismissed him from the Court.

Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred were especially bitter against Sir Launcelot, and did all they could to bring about his downfall.

After the departure of Sir Launcelot the Queen gave a private dinner to Sir Gawaine and his brothers and a few other knights, so that the party numbered twenty-four. Sir Gawaine had a liking for all kinds of fruit, especially apples, and in order to please him, the Queen obtained some for him. Sir Pinel le Savage, one of the guests, hated Sir Gawaine, and knowing his taste for apples, poisoned these, thinking to rid himself of his enemy.

During the dinner a knight named Patrise took one of the poisoned apples, and upon eating it fell down dead. Sir Gawaine imagined that the dinner had been arranged in order to encompass his own death, and Sir Mador de la Porte, cousin to Sir Patrise, openly accused the Queen of murder. During this disturbance King Arthur arrived, and hearing of its cause, was a passing heavy man.

Sir Mador again, and this time to the King, accused the Queen of treason, for this was the name given to such a crime in those days. "Fair lords," said King Arthur, "me repenteth of this trouble, but the case is so that I must be a rightful judge; me repenteth also that as such I may not do battle for my wife, for I deem this deed never came by her."

He then asked Sir Mador if he would be satisfied by a knight fighting as the Queen's champion and for the rights of the matter. Sir Mador would not agree to this, and insisted that the Queen be brought to trial. "For," said he, "there is none of the four and twenty knights that were bidden to the feast but has suspicion of the Queen."

The Queen then vowed her innocence before God, but Sir Mador still insisted upon the trial, so the King decreed that they should meet in fifteen days' time, and if there was no knight then present to act as champion for the Queen she should be burnt in judgment. With that all the knights withdrew.

King Arthur then asked Guenever if she could tell him the cause of the poisoning of the fruit, but she could not. He then asked her where Sir Launcelot was, that he might act as her champion. "For," said he, "who that hath Sir Launcelot upon his part hath the most man of worship on his side." The Queen could not say where Sir Launcelot was, as nothing had been heard of him since he had been dismissed the Court.

King Arthur then suggested she should ask Sir Bors to be her knight. Sir Bors refused, for as he was one of those present at the feast he was afraid it might be thought that he had been a party to the crime. The Queen then kneeled to him and begged him to defend her, and the King coming in at that moment also requested him to do so, and at last he agreed to be present on the day arranged and if there were no better knight there, he would fight for the Queen.

Sir Bors then sent messengers to look for Sir Launcelot, so that he should be acquainted with the news and should appear on behalf of the Queen. Sir Launcelot was found, and he promised to come at the last moment and relieve Sir Bors, but

until that time Sir Bors was to act as if he were the Queen's champion.

Many knights were incensed against Sir Bors for his action, believing that the Queen was guilty.

On the appointed morning, Sir Mador went to the King and took his oath that the Queen was guilty of treason, and that unto his oath he would prove it with his body. Right so went Sir Bors and said, "That as for Queen Guenever, she is in the right, and I will make good with my hands that she is not culpable of this treason that is put upon her."

Then the fire was lighted near an iron stake, and the Queen was put in the Constable's ward.

Just before Sir Bors started out to meet Sir Mador there rode from the wood a knight, all armed, who took his place and defeated Sir Mador, and when it was discovered that this knight was Sir Launcelot, the King and Queen made great joy of other.

The Queen's innocence was proved later when Sir Pinel's guilt was discovered, and he fled the country.

3. THE PLOT AGAINST SIR LAUNCELOT

The fact that the innocence of the Queen had been proved by Sir Launcelot increased the wrath of Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred against them both, and daily and nightly they ever spied upon them and tried to embitter King Arthur against them.

Sir Agravaine said to Sir Gawaine, his brother, that King Arthur was being shamed by Sir Launcelot. Then spoke Sir Gawaine and also Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, "Brother, I charge you, and pray you, move no more in this matter."

"But," Sir Mordred said, "then will I."

"Brother Sir Mordred," said Sir Gawaine, "I would ye left all this, and made ye not so busy, for I know what will fall of it."

"What fall may," said Sir Agravaine, "I will disclose it to the King."

They were warned that many would side with Sir Launcelot, and they were reminded of the numerous deeds Sir Launcelot had done for the good of them all, but nothing would stay the hand of Sir Mordred.

"Alas!" said Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth, "now is this realm wholly mischieved, and the noble Fellowship of the Round Table destroyed."

Sir Mordred and Sir Agravaine then went to the King and

accused Sir Launcelot and the Queen, but the King refused to believe anything against them.

Sir Mordred and Sir Agravaine then said they could prove their words. The King agreed that if they could prove to him the charge they had made he would be bound to believe them.

Then they asked the King to remain away from the castle for a night, acquainting the Queen of his intention, and when he had gone, they and twelve other knights hid themselves in a chamber in the castle.

Sir Launcelot went to visit the Queen unarmed, and when he entered her room the spies placed themselves in such positions that he could not escape. Then they cried out, "Traitor knight, Sir Launcelot du Lake, now art thou taken."

Sir Launcelot, being unarmed, could not come from the Queen's chamber without being killed, so, opening the door a little way, he seized one of the knights, drew him into the room and killed him. He then put on the dead man's armour, and, opening the door, killed the remaining eleven knights, including Sir Agravaine, and wounded Sir Mordred.

Sir Launcelot knew that King Arthur would be his enemy for this act, for it was a sin against the Fellowship to slay another Knight of the Round Table. He also knew that King Arthur was privy to the arrangement made by Sir Mordred, although he did not understand the full meaning of it, and that the thirteen knights he had slain had thus to a certain extent been chosen by King Arthur to betray him.

He knew also that now the King could do no other than judge the Queen by fire, on account of the disturbance the event would cause.

Being uncertain that the King would believe his account of the incident, he called all his friends together to ask their advice. Four score knights supported Sir Launcelot, and it was agreed that at any cost the Queen must be saved from the wrath of King Arthur, and that if rescue was necessary Sir Launcelot should take her to his castle, Joyous Gard, until such time as he could restore her to the King. Sir Launcelot pointed out to his friends that by standing with him they might be destroyed, and that in any case they were showing disobedience to their lord, King Arthur, but they all replied that as they had had so much worship and weal with Sir Launcelot they would take the woe with him as they had taken the weal.

By this time Sir Mordred had hastened to King Arthur and accused Sir Launcelot of being found in the Queen's chamber. The King was very wroth, and decided that she must suffer death.



SIR LAUNCELOT RESCUES THE QUEEN FROM THE FIRE.

Sir Gawaine pleaded with the King, saying that there was no proof of evil intent, that Sir Launcelot had ever been of service to the Queen, and that he might have gone to her in secrecy in order to avoid slander. King Arthur would not listen to him, but vowed the Queen should burn, and that if he was able to get hold of Sir Launcelot he should suffer also.

He then instructed Sir Gawaine, with Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, to take the Queen to the fire. Sir Gawaine refused, but Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, being younger knights, did not take such a firm stand; they consented to be present, but, out of chivalry to the Queen, went unarmed.

4. THE PRIDE OF SIR LAUNCELOT

Sir Launcelot arranged with someone to espy what time the Queen should go unto her death, and to advise him when he saw her despoiled to her smock.

The Queen was then led forth, and with much wringing of hands and weeping and wailing, she was taken to the stake.

But when she had been shriven and the fire was to be applied to her, there came a rushing and hurling, and Sir Launcelot, slashing and killing all who came in his way, rode straight to the Queen, released her, set her behind him upon his horse, and carried her away to Joyous Gard. Amongst those who were unwittingly slain by Sir Launcelot were Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris.

When King Arthur heard of the rescue of the Queen and the death of Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris he swooned for sorrow. "Ah, Agravaine and Mordred," said he, "Jesu forgive ye, for thine evil hath caused all this sorrow."

When Sir Gawaine heard of the death of his brothers he vowed that from that day he would never fail Sir Launcelot until the one had slain the other.

This illustration shows the dramatic scene of Sir Launcelot rushing to save the Queen. Had it not been for his pride, which made him desire to be the centre of attraction, the whole story would have ended differently, and the Fellowship would not have been destroyed.

Confident in his own strength, he was sure that he could rescue the Queen. He knew a large crowd would collect to see her burn, and he pictured himself effecting the rescue and riding off with the Queen, the crowd cheering

him as he went. His pride also made him forget, for the second time, the Queen's agony of fear and that others might be injured for no fault of their own.

Had he considered the matter, he would have acted differently, and then he would not have killed his brother knights, and so incensed Sir Gawaine against him. The King would not have fought against him, and he would not have gone to Gaul. The Fellowship would have remained strong, Sir Mordred would not have had the power to attack the King, and the Fellowship would not have been broken up.

On the Quest for spiritual things pride was Sir Launcelot's undoing; concerning worldly things it was his ruin.

5. THE PRIDE OF KING ARTHUR

Sir Gawaine then persuaded the King to collect all his forces together to lay siege about Sir Launcelot at Joyous Gard.

Sir Launcelot's army was too small to meet the King in open battle, and the siege lasted for fifteen weeks. Then Sir Launcelot spoke to King Arthur and Sir Gawaine, and explained that he had no wish to enter into actual fighting against his King.

King Arthur accused him of having abducted the Queen, but Sir Launcelot repudiated the charge, and pointed out that on many occasions he had done battle for the Queen and saved her at the risk of his own life, and but for him she would have been burnt. He further said that had he allowed this to be done, he would have lost much honour in his knighthood. He then asked the King to take the Queen back so as to end the matter.

Sir Gawaine would not listen to this, but taunted Sir Launcelot with being afraid to fight.

Then the knights who were with Sir Launcelot insisted upon his fighting, and, having charged them all to save King Arthur and Sir Gawaine, Sir Launcelot brought his fellowship out of the castle to do battle.

Sir Bors met King Arthur and smote him down, and then asked Sir Launcelot if he should slay him and thus end the war, but Sir Launcelot alit off his horse and mounted the King on it.

"My lord Arthur," said he, "for God's love stint this strife, for ye get here no worship, and I would do mine utterance, but always I forbear you, and ye nor none of yours forbearth



THE RETURN
OF THE
QUEEN AND
SIR LAUNCE-
LOT TO KING
ARTHUR.

me, my lord ; remember what I have done in many places, and now I am evil rewarded."

King Arthur looked at him and the tears brast out of his eyes, but he rode on his way so that he might no longer behold him, and said, " Alas, that ever this war began !"

The next morning the battle began again. Sir Bors met Sir Gawaine and they were both wounded ; but by the evening Sir Launcelot was the better placed for victory.

The war continued until the Pope sent an emissary to King Arthur commanding him to cease fighting with Launcelot and to be friends with him once more, and also to take the Queen back again.

King Arthur would have consented to this, but Sir Gawaine would not agree to anything but that Sir Launcelot should come safe to the King with the Queen, and go safe. This message was taken to Sir Launcelot.

As the King had agreed that the Queen should come back to him, Sir Launcelot was bound to take her to him. So, eight days afterwards, with great ceremony, he rode with the Queen to King Arthur, and they both kneeled before him.

Sir Launcelot explained to the King all that had taken place, pointing out the many things he had done for King Arthur, and also for Sir Gawaine and the Fellowship generally.

Many a bold knight there with King Arthur wept tenderly as they saw the sight.

Then again spoke Sir Launcelot to the King. " My most redoubted King, I have brought to you my lady the Queen, as right requireth, and if there be any knight, of whatsoever degree that he be, except your person, that will say or dare say, but that she is true and clene to you, I here myself, Sir Launcelot du Lake, will make it good upon his body, that she is a true lady unto you, but liars ye have listened and that hath caused debate betwixt you and me.

" For time hath been, my lord Arthur, that ye have been greatly pleased with me when I did battle for my lady, your Queen, and sithen it pleased you at many times that I should fight for her, meseemeth, my good lord, I had more cause to rescue her from the fire, insomuch she should have been brent for my sake."

" Well, well, Sir Launcelot," said the King, " I have given thee no cause to do to me as thou hast done, for I have worshipped thee and thine more than any of all my knights."

Sir Gawaine then interposed, and told the King that he would no longer serve him if he made peace with Sir Launcelot.

The King would not forgive Sir Launcelot, who then pleaded with Sir Gawaine for his goodwill. Sir Gawaine would not accord him this, but told him that he must leave the country within fifteen days or the war would continue.

Preferring to leave rather than fight against his King, Sir Launcelot prepared to depart. He sighed, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Alas," he said, "most noble Christian realm, whom I have loved above all other realms, and in thee I have gotten a great part of my worship, now I must depart in this wise. I repent that ever I came to this realm, to be banished undeserved, but fortune is neither constant nor abiding."

He then turned to Guenever and, in the hearing of them all, he said, "Madam, now I must depart from you and this noble Fellowship for ever, and sithen it is so, I beseech you to pray for me, and say me well, and if ye be hard bestrad by any false tongue, send me word, and if any knight's hand may deliver you by battle, I shall deliver you."

He then kissed the Queen, and then he said, all openly, "Now let see what he be in this place that dare say the Queen is not true unto my lord Arthur, let see who will speak and he dare speak."

He then took his leave and departed, and as he took his horse to ride away there was neither King, duke nor earl, baron nor knight, lady nor gentlewoman, that did not sob and weep for pure dole of his departing.

This narrative shows that the pride of Arthur prevented him from making peace with Sir Launcelot and caused this knight to leave the Fellowship, taking many knights away with him.

It is symbolical of his losing the second of his kingly virtues, namely, Humility.

6. THE DEPARTURE OF SIR LAUNCELOT

Sir Launcelot returned to Joyous Gard and asked his knights what was the best course to adopt. They agreed that if he desired to stay in Britain and fight the matter out they would stay with him, and that if he left Britain they would follow him wherever he went.

He decided to go to Gaul, where he had great possessions, and so he and all his knights departed together.

This did not appease the anger of Sir Gawaine, who persuaded King Arthur to prepare a great army and follow Sir Launcelot.

Before leaving the country, King Arthur left Sir Mordred as chief ruler of all Britain.

On their arrival in Gaul, the army of King Arthur began to destroy the lands of Sir Launcelot, who sent them a message to desist as he had no wish to fight against his King.

For a long time he stood out, although Sir Gawaine taunted him with being afraid, but at last he met Sir Gawaine in battle and felled him to the ground. He then withdrew without slaying him.

When Sir Gawaine had recovered, he again met Sir Launcelot and was again defeated by him, and again Sir Launcelot spared his life.

Before he had recovered sufficiently to meet Sir Launcelot a third time, news came from Britain that Sir Mordred had called all the lords together and had persuaded them to make him King, and that he had arranged a day to be married to Guenever, but she, having asked his leave to go to London to buy things for the wedding, had gone to the Tower, which she was holding against Mordred who was besieging it.

King Arthur hastened home with his army, and on landing at Dover, met the army of Sir Mordred, and in this battle Sir Gawaine was killed.

Before he died he desired that he might have paper and pen to write to Sir Launcelot with his own hands. Thus he wrote:

“Unto Sir Launcelot, flower of all noble knights that ever I saw or heard of by my days, I, Sir Gawaine, send thee greeting.

I will that all the world wit, that I, Sir Gawaine, Knight of the Table Round, beseech thee, Sir Launcelot, to return again to this realm and pray some prayer more or less for my soul.

Also, Sir Launcelot, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying, but come over the sea in all haste, that thou mayest with thy noble knights rescue that noble King that made thee knight, that is my lord Arthur, for he is full straitly bestad with a false traitor, Sir Mordred.

This letter is written with my own hand but a short time before my death and subscribed with part of my heart's blood.”

The letter never reached Sir Launcelot, and he did not know that his King was in danger.

Ever the fighting continued further west, until in the final battle King Arthur met Sir Mordred and ran him through with his spear. As it entered his body, Sir Mordred thrust himself nearer to King Arthur, and with his sword smote him on the head so that the brain pan was pierced.

The illustration shows the last fight between Arthur and Mordred.

Taken allegorically, this scene teaches that retribution inevitably follows upon sin, and, unless atonement is made, destroys the sinner. Mordred, who owed his existence to Arthur, personifies the retributive justice which pursued Arthur in order to destroy him.

The story of Mordred's parentage illustrates the loss of the first of the three virtues (Purity), which Arthur as a King should have maintained.

Arthur's sin was unpremeditated, and to a certain extent he was a victim of circumstance. His lapse was not of an extreme character, but his failure to rid himself of its evil consequences caused these to cling to him for the rest of his life.

The loss of the second of his three virtues (Humility), was also traceable to Mordred, for it was he who was the creator of the disturbing situation which caused the trouble between the King and Sir Launcelot, and which culminated in the deaths of Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, and the disruption of the Fellowship. This loss of virtue was also in itself not extreme. It was rather that his personal pride was offended than that he was of an arrogant and overbearing nature.

His third virtue, Faith, he still possessed. The symbol of this was the blade of his Sword.

He had worked, so far as he knew, in accordance with the Divine Will, yet he realised that everything was slipping away from him, his life's work was destroyed, and his Fellowship broken.

He had been chosen King because of the high principles that he upheld. He had remained King on account of his strength. He had become a great King by reason of the work he had done for the Fellowship which through his influence had spread Christian principles throughout the land. He had risen from the position of an ordinary person to the extreme height of popularity and power.



THE FIGHT BETWEEN KING ARTHUR AND SIR MORDRED.

His failures were comparatively small. The mystery of birth and the mystery of death had not troubled him. Present life and its responsibilities had been first in his thoughts. He had realised that his life had to be spent in service, and he had lived according to this rule. He knew there was no beginning nor ending, and that life and effort are eternal, and are thus at one with God. He had not spared himself in any way because he had desired to be in every respect worthy of his manhood.

And now he was at the lowest ebb of his life. Only one unwounded knight was left to him, and he was surrounded by the dead and the dying. The Fellowship, which had been the pride of his heart and for which he had worked so hard, had been dispersed, and but for their deeds, which would live after them, they were as if they had never existed. It was beyond his understanding. His big heart was tired. He was appalled at the thought of it all. He had asked for help from God; it had been given to him, and yet he felt that all was lost. He could not understand it all. He lost his Faith. Alas! said he, I am come to mine end.

But in this also his failure was not great. He had but lost faith in himself. This was due to the pitiful plight in which he found himself. His Christian Faith, represented by the Cross, was with him still.

This part of the story is meant to show that a man seeks solitude when he is faced by a great difficulty which he has to fight out for himself. Bedivere represents the human friend, faithful but with little power to help.

In moments of extremity the brain works quickly, Arthur saw, as in a flash, what was wrong and how he had helped to bring about the disaster. His mind, which had vaguely sensed that all was not well, that there was something wanting in his life, became suddenly clear.

He realised that the Sword which he had desired and asked for, and which had been a personal gift from God to him, had not been used for the best.

The words of the exhortation of Amytans, that the rule of the people stood only in the King's virtue, now had a definite meaning to him.

He saw that his faults were more serious because of his position as a King. He knew that as an example and as a leader he had failed.

He knew that he would have to recover his lost position before he could do any good service again. He

would have to face the punishment that he deserved for his sin.

He had lost everything of which he had been proud, the Fellowship he had loved above everything else was gone, and his life's work was destroyed. He had to begin all over again, and this time without the possession of those virtues which in his youth had helped him to do great things.

He knew he had to fight this out as a MAN. He saw clearly his sins, and the way to recover from their evil effects.

He ignored the warnings of Bedivere, who still had the welfare of his King at heart. His old fighting spirit which had enabled him to retain his Faith when fighting with Sir Accolan returned, and he regained the Faith which he had lost.

By acknowledging his fault, he regained his Humility.

Mordred, the evil knight, the cause of all the trouble, stood before him, and Arthur saw in him his own sin. He ignored his Sword, the symbol of Power, for which he had no further use. "Now give me my spear," he said, and by driving it through Mordred attached himself to him. Had he let go of the spear he could have escaped from the blow of Mordred, but this he had no desire to do and so he received his wound.

He was permitted to destroy the result of his sin. His courage in attacking and killing Mordred shows his victory over sin. By holding on to Mordred in spite of the danger to himself, he received his self-desired earthly punishment, which he was prepared to face. Thus did he regain his Purity.

The physical wound symbolises his spiritual wound; it shows the inability of any human being to stand upright when the Divine laws have been broken. By the blow of Mordred he was smitten to his knees, the attitude of contrition and of prayer, for in no other position could he appear before his Maker.

Although shorn of all power, broken and wounded by his effort to destroy the sin that had followed him all his life, he was again the Captain of his own Soul, a symbol of the unconquerable soul of mankind fighting to retain union with Divinity.

From the depths he rose to the extreme height that mankind is capable of reaching, by means of his physical courage which enabled him to defeat and destroy that



THE SCENE OF THE LAST BATTLE.

evil which had marred the beauty of his life, and by his spiritual courage which was shown in his subsequent action.

Sir Mordred then fell dead, and Arthur was alone with Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere.

In attempting to carry the King, Sir Lucan, who was wounded, died, and Sir Bedivere had to place the King on the ground.

7. THE RETURN OF EXCALIBUR TO THE POOL

Sir Bedivere was, however, able to carry the King for some distance alone. Then the King commanded him to take his Sword Excalibur and throw it into the pool which was near.

"Therefore," said Arthur unto Sir Bedivere, "take thou Excalibur, my good Sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my Sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou there seest." "My lord," said Bedivere, "your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again."

So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble Sword, that the pommel and the haft was all of precious stones; and then he said to himself, "If I throw this rich Sword in the water, whereof shall never come good, but harm and loss." And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree.

And so, as soon as he might, he came again unto the King, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the Sword in the water. "What saw thou there?" said the King. "Sir," he said, "I saw nothing but waves and winds." "That is untruly said of thee," said the King, "therefore go thou lightly again, and do my commandment; as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in."

Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the Sword in his hand; and then he thought sin and shame to throw away that noble Sword, and so ofte he hid the Sword, and returned again, and told to the King that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. "What saw thou there?" said the King. "Sir," he said, "I saw nothing but the water wappe and waves wanne." "Ah, traitor untrue," said King Arthur, "now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that, thou that hast been to me so lief and dear? and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the richness

of the Sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do not as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands; for thou wouldst for my rich Sword see me dead."

Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the Sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the Sword as far into the water as he might; and there came an arm and an hand above the water and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the Sword in the water.

8. THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

Sir Bedivere then went to the King and carried him to the water side. And there hove to the bank a barge with many fair ladies in it, and they all had black hoods, and they wept and shrieked when they saw the King.

"Now put me into the barge," said he. And so he did softly, and there received him gently three Queens, and so they set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And that Queen said, "Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me?"

And so they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld them all go from him.

Then Sir Bedivere cried, "Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among my enemies?"

"Comfort thyself," said the King, "and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in, for I will into the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound, and if thou never hear more of me, pray for my soul."

But ever the Queens and ladies wept and shrieked that it was pity to hear.

And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost sight of the barge, he wept and wailed and so took the forest.

The illustration shows the King being helped into the barge by Sir Bedivere and the Queens waiting to receive him.

This picture and incident are full of allegory.

Arthur, humble and ashamed, had desired his Sword Excalibur to be returned from whence it came. That



THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

personal gift of God to him had to be given back. The scabbard had already been thrown into the water, long ago. Now the Sword also was to be cast into the water over which Arthur was to pass.

Sir Bedivere could not understand what was in the mind of Arthur. Many think that Sir Bedivere, the faithful knight who had been the companion of King Arthur from the time of his coronation, had turned traitor to him when he was wounded and helpless. This is not so. To the mind of Sir Bedivere the Sword represented the Faith of King Arthur, that Faith which had enabled him to do such mighty deeds. Bedivere, the last knight, believed that it was his duty to continue to make the Faith known. He wished to carry on Arthur's work. But Arthur knew that his Faith had become too weak a thing to be relied upon. His words, "Comfort thyself, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in," show his feelings.

He was broken, helpless, and ashamed, but yet victorious; he no longer possessed the emblem of Royal Power, but, as an ordinary man, representing the equality of all men in the sight of God, he had to make his peace with God, to give an account of his stewardship. So trusting in the mercy and love of God, he went to that eternal source of help, symbolised by the three Queens, Faith, Hope, and Love, to be healed and strengthened in order to be able to begin again. And because he had done his best, the Queens took him, with motherly tenderness, into their care.

Love said to him, 'Why have ye tarried so long from me?' Hope bade him rely upon the mercy of God. Faith waited near at hand. And together they took him to the vale of Avilion to be healed.

And so renewed afresh, the spirit of Arthur will return again, and yet again.

He is an example to us, for although we are human, if we are armed with the Sword of the Soul we need never give up, however severely we are being tested, for we need never be defeated and never die.

And some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had, by the will of our Lord Jesu, into another place, and men say he shall come again and he shall win the Holy Cross.

I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in

this world he changed his life. But many men say there is written upon his tomb this verse:

HIC JACET ARTHURUS REX QUONDAM REX QUE FUTURUS.

There is a local tradition that his spirit lives in one of the almost extinct birds which are sometimes seen at Tintagel.

There are many other legends concerning the mystery of Arthur's passing.

The future Arthur, for whom the world waits, will be tried by the same tests. There will be another sword to be pulled from a stone or anvil, and to the Christian man who has the virtues of Faith, Humility and Purity, may the Power be given.

The next picture is a view of Dosmary Pool as it appears today. This is said to be the spot from which King Arthur went to Avilion with the Queens.

This small lake on the moors suggests mystery. It is situated on very high ground in the midst of wild, desolate and uncultivated country strewn with immense granite rocks. It is the place where those who are in deep trouble can go to fight things out alone. It is near the small hamlet of Temple, a spot where the Crusaders went to rest for a time before starting on the holy Crusades. It is in the midst of a district full of stone circles and barrows, ancient burial places of Celtic Kings. And here was Arthur seen for the last time by mortal eyes.

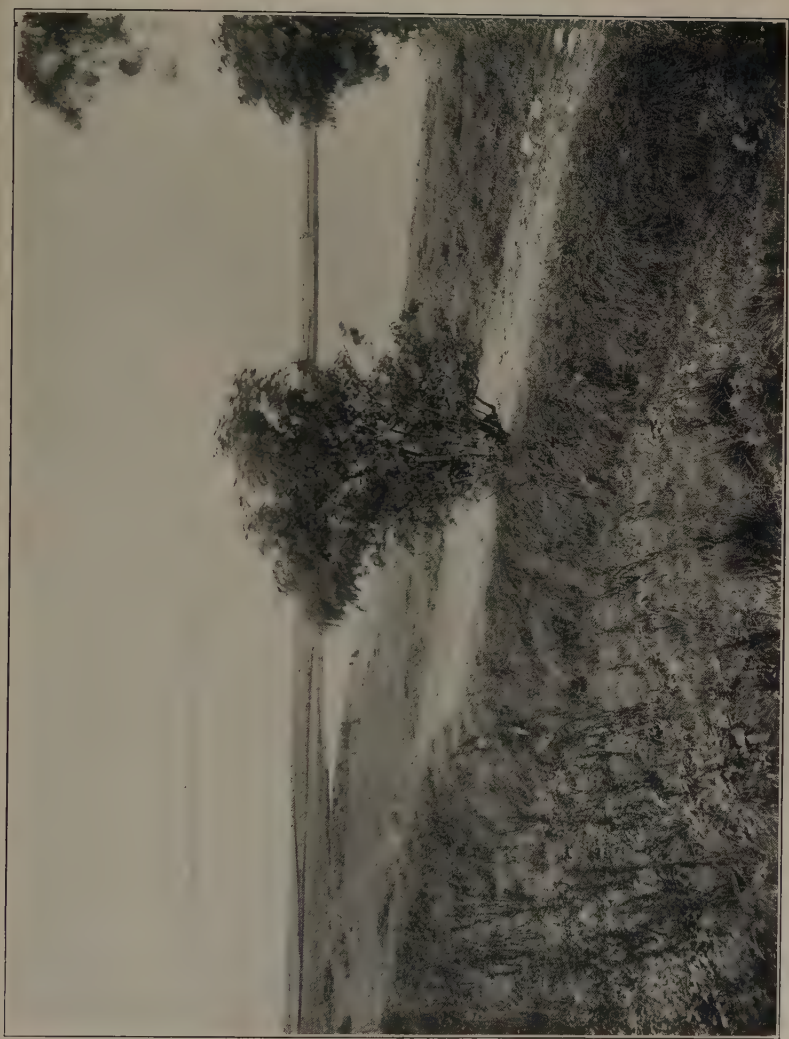
After the passing of Arthur, Guenever retired to a convent, broken-hearted at her loss. She desired to spend the rest of her life as a nun, and this privilege was granted her.

9. THE REMORSE OF SIR LAUNCELOT

Sir Launcelot, hearing of the passing of Arthur, returned to Britain and sought the Queen.

When she saw him she swooned, and when she might speak she said, "Wit thou well, Sir Launcelot, I am set in such a plight to get my soul healed, therefore I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage, and I command thee to thy kingdom turn again, and keep well thy realm from war and wrake."

Sir Launcelot departed with much sorrow and went to a hermitage, where he became a holy man.



DOSMARY POOL.

Upon the death of the Queen he caused her to be buried as befitted a Queen.

When she was put in the earth Sir Launcelot swooned, but a hermit awakened him and told him he was displeasing God with such manner of sorrow making.

"Truly," said Sir Launcelot, "I trust I do not displease God, for He knoweth mine intent. For my sorrow was not, nor is not, for any rejoicing of sin, but that my sorrow may never have end. For when I remember of her beauty, and of her noblesse, that was both with her King and with her, truly mine heart would not serve to sustain my careful body. And when I remember me how by my default, mine orgulity and my pride, that the King and Queen were both laid low, that were peerless that ever was living of Christian people, wit you well, this remembered of their kindness and mine unkindness, sank so to mine heart, that I might not sustain myself."

He spent the rest of his life full of remorse for not having been at the King's side in his hour of need, and also for having helped to destroy the Fellowship. But this remorse was of no avail. During his working life he had shown no anxiety to live in complete accordance with the symbols of the sword. He had never attempted to pull out any sword on any occasion when this test was being used. His sword was to him merely a weapon to be used for his own glorification, and his presumption in forcing his way into the presence of the Sangreal was characteristic of him.

On the other hand, his loyalty to his King, his tenderness to his Queen, his patience with Sir Gawaine, and his prowess as a knight, showed his greatness. As the Queen's knight he had to be closely associated with her, and the tales of intrigue may or may not have been true.

His love and tenderness towards Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat, revealed the nobility of his character and a true sense of his duty as a knight towards women.

His grief for the death of the King and Queen was very deep, and he spent much of his time near the stone which had been erected to their memory, mourning their loss.

When he died his brother, Sir Ector, standing by his body, said:

"Ah, Launcelot, thou were head of all Christian knights, and now I dare say thou, Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, that thou were never matched of earthly knight's hand.

And thou were the courteoust knight that ever bare shield.

And thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrad horse.

And thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman.

And thou were the kindest man that ever struck with sword.

And thou were the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights.

And thou were the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies.

And thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest."

Then there was weeping and dolour out of measure. And after fifteen days he was buried with great devotion.

There is not room in this work to describe in detail all the knights. The principal ones have to serve as types of knight-hood and stand as examples of them all.

The characters that have been made prominent are King Arthur, Sir Launcelot du Lake, Sir Galahad, Sir Gawaine, Sir Bedivere, Sir Bors, Sir Percivale, and Sir Mordred, and there are references to Sir Balin, Sir Gaheris, Sir Gareth, and Queen Guenever.

The lessons they teach stand out clearly.

We can learn from the tragic life of King Arthur how his yielding to temptation and the loss of his Purity caused trouble and misery to all classes of people, how his pride and the loss of his Humility caused strife and fighting amongst those who had no real cause for quarrel, and how the loss of the first two virtues caused him to lose Faith.

His personal knowledge of sin gave him insight into human frailty. Realising his imperfections, he did not attempt to go on the Quest for the Sangreal, as did Sir Galahad and Sir Launcelot.

We can learn also that those who hold the lamp on high, and who show courage, steadfastness, and high purpose, as he did, will have mercy and kindness shown to them.

Loss of Courage would have meant total loss of Faith, for Faith is a belief in the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom, and if we believe that we ourselves are part of that kingdom, the loss of Faith is fatal.

Arthur was great in success, and greater still in the hour of his disaster, and it may be said of him that he has set an example to serve for ever.



QUEEN GUENEVER IN THE CONVENT GARDEN.

All need the courage of Arthur, although perhaps not for the same reasons. Preachers, doctors, those interested in benevolent causes, those who are ill or suffering, those who carry any burden, all have need of courage; in fact, life, even the simplest, needs courage to be lived at all.

Therefore we must not in any way deprive others of the power to fight and to work out their own salvation, for by so doing we rob them of their birthright. We must encourage them to follow the example of Arthur.

All need the Faith of Arthur. Those who try to do some great, good, or difficult work will find that things go wrong repeatedly; then they become weary and lose heart—in fact, all seems lost; but if they go to Faith, Hope, and Love to be cured, not of necessity waiting as long as Arthur did, they, too, will be able to return with renewed strength.

If the opportunities of anyone are greater than another's, then so, too, are the responsibilities greater, and if that person falls, the greater also the fall, and greater the courage required to begin again. Arthur as a king had greater opportunities than most, and he rose to greater heights; his failure was also greater than most—but the remedy was the same.

The courage to do the right thing will always be associated with the name of Arthur.

We can learn from the life of Sir Launcelot that, however wonderful we are, we must have spiritual vision or we shall perish; that if after repeated warnings we persist in our faults there will be nothing for us but grief and remorse; that those who have been blessed more abundantly than others, either in wisdom or in material things, have greater responsibilities to live up to, and that pride must not be allowed to enter in.

We can learn from the life of Sir Galahad how important it is to determine upon our course of life early if we desire to accomplish the Supreme Quest and achieve the Sangreal.

We can learn from the life of Sir Bedivere the beauty of faithfulness.

We can learn from the lives of Sir Percivale and Sir Bors the beauty of noble conduct and knightly virtue.

We can learn from the story of Sir Balin that those in authority must exercise humility, and not in any way misuse their power, and from the story of Sir Gawaine, that if we are unable to control our hate we shall be the cause of much misery.

In the story, Sir Launcelot, best and strongest of knights, spent the last days of his life in remorse, but he was beloved of his fellow men even after death.

Sir Galahad, purest of knights, looking beyond the symbol of the Sangreal to the open vision of Divine Loveliness during his life, died in perfect holiness, and a record was made of his deeds.

The King died as a man should die, in complete surrender to God.

From the lives of the last three may be gathered the full meaning of the story of King Arthur and his knights which was in the mind of Malory, and the reason which prompted Caxton to write, "Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown." Amen.



THE REMORSE OF SIR LAUNCELOT.

PART IV

1. THE STORY OF SIR LAUNCELOT AND THE LILY MAID OF ASTOLAT

KING ARTHUR had arranged for a tournament to take place at Camelot, and Sir Launcelot proceeded on his way thither until he came to Astolat, where he begged a lodging of the baron, Sir Bernard, which was granted to him freely because he was a Knight of the Round Table, although the baron knew not who he was.

Sir Launcelot asked his host if he would lend him a shield that would not be recognised, so that he might use it at the tournament in place of his own, which was well known.

Sir Bernard had two sons, Sir Tirre and Sir Lavaine, who had but lately been made knights, and he granted the use of Sir Tirre's shield to Sir Launcelot, and agreed that his younger son, Sir Lavaine, should ride with him as his knight.

He then asked Sir Launcelot to tell him his name, but Sir Launcelot asked to be held excused. He promised, however, that if God gave him grace to speed well at the jousts he would return to Astolat and then disclose himself.

The daughter of the baron, Elaine, beheld Sir Launcelot and fell in love with him. She beseeched him to wear upon him at the tournament a token of hers, but Sir Launcelot replied that he had never worn a lady's token before, and did not wish to do so. He remembered, however, that he was disguising himself on this occasion, and as this would further assist him in this object, he agreed to do so.

Sir Launcelot then took her favour and her brother's shield, and, leaving his own shield in her keeping, rode on his way.

At the tournament Sir Launcelot did the most marvellous deeds of arms that ever man saw or heard speak of.

When he was asked to receive the honour and the prize, King Arthur desired to know his name; as he was wounded he refused to take his prize, but asked to be allowed to depart at once, for he had no desire greater than to repose himself.

Whilst he was riding with Sir Lavaine he swooned, and had to be assisted to a hermitage.

King Arthur caused a search to be made for the unknown knight, but without success.

Sir Gawaine, returning home from the tournament, arrived at the castle of Sir Bernard, and stayed with him. He told him of the marvellous deeds of the unknown knight who wore a lady's token, and Elaine asked him to describe it to her. This he did, and she knew the knight to be the one who wore her favour, and whom she loved.

"Blessed be God," said she, "that that knight sped so well, for he is the man in the world that I first loved, and truly he shall be the last that ever I shall love."

"Know ye his name?" said Sir Gawaine.

"Nay truly," said Elaine, "I know not his name nor from whence he came, but I promise you and God that I love him."

She then told Sir Gawaine all she knew about him and how she had his shield in her keeping. She brought this to Sir Gawaine, who then knew by the same that the knight was Sir Launcelot.

"I dread me," said Sir Gawaine, "that ye shall never see him again in this world, for wit ye well he is grievously wounded."

Elaine then asked permission to ride and seek him; by fortune she saw her brother Sir Lavaine, and together they rode to the hermitage where Sir Launcelot was.

She remained with him and nursed him for a month, but one day when she was gathering herbs to make him a balm, he put on his armour and attempted to ride. The effort was too much for him, and he swooned and fell to the ground. Elaine found him, kissed him, and tried to awake him, but her efforts were in vain.

She obtained assistance, and he was taken back to the hermitage, where she again nursed him until he became well.

Then they made them ready to depart from the hermit, and took their horses, and when they came to Astolat they were well lodged and had great cheer of Sir Bernard.

And so upon the morn when Sir Launcelot should depart, fair Elaine brought her father with her, and thus she said:

"My lord, Sir Launcelot, now I see ye will depart; now fair knight and courteous knight, have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die for thy love."

"What would ye that I did?" said Sir Launcelot.

"I would have you to my husband," said Elaine.

"Fair damosel, I thank you," said Sir Launcelot. "But truly," said he, "I cast me never to be wedded man."

"Alas!" said she, "then must I die for your love."



THE PARTING OF SIR LAUNCELOT FROM THE LILY MAID.

"Ye shall not so," said Sir Launcelot, "for wit ye well, fair maiden, I might have been married an I had would, but I never applied me to be married yet; but by cause, fair damosel, that ye love me as ye say ye do, I will for your good will and kindness show you some goodness and that is this, that wheresoever ye will beset your heart upon some good knight that will wed you, I shall give you together a thousand pound yearly to you and to your heirs; thus much will I give you, fair madam, for your kindness, and always while I live to be your own knight."

"Of all this," said the maiden, "I will none, for but if ye will wed me, wit you well, Sir Launcelot, my good days are done."

"Fair damosel," said Sir Launcelot, "of this ye must pardon me."

Then she shrieked shrilly, and fell down in a swoon; and then women bare her into her chamber, and there she made over much sorrow; and then Sir Launcelot would depart, and there he asked Sir Lavaine what he would do.

"What should I do," said Sir Lavaine, "but follow you, but if ye drive me from you, or command me to go from you."

Then came Sir Bernard to Sir Launcelot and said to him: "I cannot see but that my daughter Elaine will die for your sake."

"I may not do withal," said Sir Launcelot, "for that me sore repenteth, for I report me to yourself, that my proffer is fair; and me repenteth," said Sir Launcelot, "that she loveth me as she doth; I was never the causer of it, for I report me to your son I early ne late proffer her bounte nor fair behests; and as for me," said Sir Launcelot, "I dare do all that a knight should do that she is a clene maiden for me, both for deed and for will. And I am right heavy of her distress, for she is a full fair maiden, good and gentle, and well taught."

"Father," said Sir Lavaine, "I dare make good she is a clene maiden as for my lord Sir Launcelot; but she doth as I do, for sithen I first saw my lord Sir Launcelot, I could never depart from him, nor nought I will and I may follow him."

Then Sir Launcelot took his leave, and so they departed.

The fair maiden of Astolat made such sorrow day and night that she never slept, ate, nor drank, and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Launcelot.

So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feebled so that she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrived her clene and received her Creator.

And ever she complained still upon Sir Launcelot. Then her ghostly father bad her leave such thoughts.

Then she said, "Why should I leave such thoughts? Am I not an earthly woman? And all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is I do none offence though I love an earthly man; and I take God to my record I loved never none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall, and a clene maiden I am for him and for all other; and sithen it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the High Father of Heaven to have mercy upon my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffered may be allegiance of part of my sins. For, sweet Lord Jesu," said the fair maiden, "I take Thee to record, on Thee I was never great offender against Thy laws; but that I loved this noble knight, Sir Launcelot, out of measure, and of myself, good Lord, I might not withstand the fervent love wherefore I have my death."

And then she called her father, Sir Bernard, and her brother, Sir Tirre, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a letter like as she did indite it; and so her father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead.

"And while my body is hot let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold; and let me be put in a fair bed with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed and all my richest clothes be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where Thames is; and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite over and over; thus, father, I beseech you let it be done."

So her father granted it faithfully, all things should be done like as she had devised.

Then her father and her brother made great dole, for when this was done anon she died. And so when she was dead the corpse and the bed all was led the next day unto Thames, and there a man and the corpse, and all, were put into Thames; and so the man steered the barget unto Westminster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro or any espied it.

So by fortune King Arthur and the Queen Guenever were speaking together at a window, and so as they looked into Thames they espied this black barget, and had marvel what it meant. Then the King called Sir Kay, and showed it him.



THE DEATH JOURNEY OF THE LILY MAID OF ASTOLAT.

"Sir," said Sir Kay, "wit you well there is some new tidings."

"Go thither," said the King to Sir Kay, "and take with you Sir Brandiles and Agravaine, and bring me ready word what is there."

Then these knights departed and came to the barget and went in; and there they found the fairest corpse lying in a rich bed, and a poor man sitting in the barget's end, and no word would he speak. So these knights returned unto the King again, and told him what they found.

"That fair corpse will I see," said the King.

And so then the King took the Queen by the hand, and went thither. Then the King made the barget to be holden fast, and then the King and the Queen entered with certain knights with them; and there he saw the fairest woman lie in a rich bed, covered unto her middle with many rich clothes, and all was of cloth of gold, and she lay as though she had smiled. Then the Queen espied a letter in her right hand and told it to the King. Then the King took it and said, "Now I am sure this letter will tell what she was, and why she is come hither."

So then the King and the Queen went out of the barget, and so commanded a certain man to wait upon the barget. And so when the King was come within his chamber, he called many knights about him, and said that he would wit openly what was written within that letter. Then the King brake it, and made a clerk to read it, and this was the intent of the letter:

"Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love. I was your lover that men called the fair maiden of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan, yet pray for my soul and bury me at least, and offer ye my mass-penny; this is my last request. And a clene maiden I died, I take God to witness; pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art peerless."

This was all the substance in the letter. And when it was read the King, the Queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Launcelot sent for; and when he was come King Arthur made the letter to be read to him. And when Sir Launcelot heard it word by word, he said:

"My lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death

of this damosel; God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that will I report me to her own brother; here he is, Sir Lavaine. I will not say nay," said Sir Launcelot, "but that she was both fair and good, and much I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure."

"Ye might have showed her," said the Queen, "some bounty and gentleness that might have preserved her life."

"Madam," said Sir Launcelot, "she would none other ways be answered but that she would be my wife, and this I would not grant her, but I proffered her, for her good love that she showed me, a thousand pound yearly to her, and to her heirs, and to wed any manner knight that she could find best to love in her heart. For, madam," said Sir Launcelot, "I love not to be constrained to love; for love must arise of the heart and not by no constraint."

"That is truth," said the King, "and many knight's love is free in himself, and never will be bounden, for where he is bounden he looseth himself."

Then said the King unto Sir Launcelot, "It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully."

"Sir," said Sir Launcelot, "that shall be done as I can best devise."

And so many knights yede thither to behold that fair maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Launcelot offered her mass-penny; and all the Knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Launcelot. And then the poor man went again with the barget.

* * * * *

This is the story of a maid who died for a great love.

2. THE STORY OF SIR GAWAINE AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

On one New Year's Day there rode into the Hall of King Arthur's Court a Green Knight. Not only was he dressed in green, but his hair and skin were green, as also was his horse and its harness.

He challenged any of the knights of King Arthur to strike him a blow with an axe he had brought with him, the knight who struck him being expected to go to his Court in a year's time and there let the Green Knight strike him in return.

King Arthur desired to accept the challenge, but Sir Gawaine prevailed upon him to let the adventure be his.

At the first stroke Sir Gawaine cut off the head of the Green Knight. The knight lifted it up, mounted his horse, and galloped away. As he departed he called to Sir Gawaine charging him to remember his promise to meet him in a year's time.

Three days before the expiration of the year Sir Gawaine went to the castle of the Green Knight. He was entertained by the wife of the knight, who pressed him to stay for three days before her husband returned the blow he had received from him. Having promised to stay, he agreed with the knight that as he was going hunting daily whilst he, Gawaine, was staying in the castle, each evening they should exchange anything they had had given them during the day.

Upon the first day Gawaine was visited by the wife of the Green Knight, who made advances to him. These he repulsed, but she kissed him ere she left him. Upon the return of the Green Knight, Sir Gawaine greeted him with a kiss, and thus fulfilled his share of the bargain.

The next day the same thing happened, except that the lady gave him two kisses. These he returned to her husband.

Upon the third day the lady, in addition to giving him three kisses, pressed him to accept her green girdle as a gift. This he did, but when the Green Knight returned, he only gave him the three kisses, retaining the girdle.

The next morning the Green Knight appeared with a much larger axe than that which he had taken to the Court of King Arthur, and struck at the neck of Sir Gawaine, but failed to hit him. Again he struck at him, and again he missed him. The third time he struck and wounded him slightly in the neck.

He then told Sir Gawaine that it was with his knowledge he had been tested by his wife, and had he restored the green girdle to him he would have been powerless to have touched him at all.

Sir Gawaine was ashamed that he had not escaped free, but he returned home with the green girdle and told the Court the whole story, although it was against himself. The ladies of the Court, however, considered he had preserved his virginity, and afterwards wore green in honour of his loyalty to the principles of a knight.

3. THE STORY OF SIR TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

King Mark of Cornwall, who held his sovereignty of King Arthur, also had to pay yearly tribute or truage to King Anguish of Ireland.

He had failed to pay this for seven years, and therefore King Anguish sent a messenger to collect it.

King Mark replied to King Anguish that he would not pay him truage any longer, but that if he still demanded it, he must send a knight of his land who would fight for his right, and he, King Mark, would find another knight to meet him.

King Anguish therefore chose Sir Marhaus to do battle for the truage due from King Mark.

Sir Marhaus sailed from Ireland and came to Tintagel, and sent a messenger to the castle demanding that truage be paid or a knight sent to do battle with him.

When King Mark knew that the knight chosen by King Anguish was Sir Marhaus he was full of sorrow, for he knew of no knight that durst have ado with him.

He therefore made a proclamation that if a knight would come forward to fight for the truage of Cornwall he should fare the better for the term of his life.

Weeks passed, but no knight was forthcoming, and each day Sir Marhaus sent a message to the King asking him to pay the truage or find a knight to fight.

One day a horseman rode into the courtyard of the castle, spoke to King Mark, and told him that if he would give him the order of knighthood he would do battle with Sir Marhaus.

King Mark was pleased with his appearance, and asked him his name and from whence he came.

The youth replied that his name was Tristram, and he was born in Lyones.

King Mark then knighted him as Tristram of Lyones, and sent a message to Sir Marhaus that a knight would battle with him to the uttermost.

In reply, however, a message came from Sir Marhaus saying that he would not do battle except with a knight who was of blood royal.

Sir Tristram then explained that he was the nephew of King Mark, and that his father was King Melodas of Lyones, and his mother was Elizabeth, the sister of King Mark.

In the morning the two knights met and fought, and the fight lasted for more than half a day. Sir Tristram was wounded in the side by the spear of Sir Marhaus, and Sir Marhaus was wounded to death by the sword of Sir Tristram, a small piece of which broke off the blade when it was withdrawn by Sir Tristram, and remained in the skull of Sir Marhaus.

Sir Marhaus, however, managed to stagger to his ship, and sailed to Ireland, where he died.

Sir Tristram did not easily recover from his wound, for the spear by which it had been made was poisoned. A wise lady, well skilled in such matters, told him that he would never recover unless he went to the country from whence the spear came which caused the wound.

He therefore went to Ireland, taking his harp with him, which instrument he was able to play skilfully.

He landed near the castle where King Anguish and his Court were living, and there he sat and harped in such a way as had never before been heard in Ireland.

King Anguish sent a knight to ask the stranger to stay with him, and when Sir Tristram arrived at the castle, the King asked him his name and how he came to be wounded.

Sir Tristram replied that he was of the country of Lyones, that his name was Tramtrist, that his wound was got in a battle which he fought for a lady's right, and that he had come to Ireland to be cured of his wound.

The King told him of the battle which his knight Sir Marhaus had fought with a knight named Sir Tristram, but the latter did not reveal himself.

Then the King called his daughter, La Beale Isoud, or Iseult, and bade her tend and minister to Tramtrist.

In a few weeks he was cured; he then taught Iseult to play the harp, and gave her costly presents. She fell in love with him.

On a certain day King Anguish gave forth that great jousts and a tournament were to take place, and that the prize would be a fair lady called the Lady of the Laundes, who was no other than the King's daughter herself.

Iseult came to Sir Tristram in great trouble, as she feared a certain Saracen knight, Sir Palomides, would be the winner of the tournament. Sir Tristram eventually was the winner, but although he stayed at the castle of the King of Ireland for a long time, he did not marry Iseult.

One day, the Queen, seeing Sir Tristram's sword lying on his bed, drew it from its scabbard and discovered a small piece

missing from the blade which corresponded to that found in the wound of Sir Marhaus. She knew then that Tramtrist, as he called himself, was the knight who had slain the knight of King Anguish.

She was in a great rage, and informed the King, who challenged Sir Tristram on the point, but Sir Tristram was able to explain that there was nothing in his action that had been dishonourable, and so the King let him depart.

Before he left, Tristram bade farewell to Iseult, who was very sad at his leaving her. He also told King Anguish that at any time he would act as his champion if the necessity arose.

In due time he arrived safely back at Tintagel.

Upon his return everyone sang his praises, so that King Mark became jealous of him and sought for some means to destroy him.

He knew of the love between Iseult and Sir Tristram, and he also knew that the King of Ireland had sent Sir Tristram away from that country lest someone should kill him in revenge for the death of Sir Marhaus, and he thought that if he sent him to Ireland some harm might befall him.

He therefore called Sir Tristram to him and told him that he intended to take to himself a wife, and as he had heard of the beauty and goodness of the daughter of the King of Ireland, he would like Sir Tristram to go there as the bearer of a message to her father concerning her.

Sir Tristram was troubled in his mind when he heard of his mission, for he then realised how deeply he loved Iseult. King Mark taunted him with being afraid of injury, and this decided Sir Tristram to go.

Before he started he received news that there was friction between King Arthur and King Anguish over the death of a knight in Ireland, which King Anguish was unjustly charged with having caused. Tristram offered himself as champion to that King, at the same time asking of him a boon to be granted at his desire, and to this King Anguish agreed.

In the battle Sir Tristram was the victor, but he refused to slay or shame the defeated knight, and thus earned the love of the other knights for his nobleness and generosity.

King Anguish and Sir Tristram sailed back to Ireland together, and when it was made known that Sir Tristram had fought for the King and that, although he had defeated his opponent, he had behaved with generosity towards him, he was held in such high honour that no one had any wish to do him harm.

No one was more joyful to see him than Iseult.



THE PARTING OF SIR TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

Sir Tristram then asked King Anguish to grant him the boon he had promised, this being that he would give his daughter to King Mark in marriage.

King Anguish was sad when he heard the request, but he was bound to grant it according to his promise. He would have been pleased to have given her to Sir Tristram.

When the time came for Sir Tristram to depart with Iseult, her mother, the Queen, procured a potent philtre and gave it into the keeping of her daughter's gentlewoman who accompanied them, giving her instructions that on arrival at Tintagel she was to mix it in the wine of King Mark and her daughter in equal parts, so that they should love each other all their days.

On the voyage Sir Tristram and Iseult drank the potion in ignorance of what it was.

True to his word, Sir Tristram on arrival at Tintagel resigned Iseult to King Mark, and they were duly married.

Many are the romantic tales told of Sir Tristram and Iseult after their arrival at Tintagel.

It is said that the potion could not be overcome, and that Sir Tristram met Iseult by stealth, until they were discovered by King Mark, who imprisoned Iseult and banished Sir Tristram to Brittany, where he married Iseult of the White Hands, the daughter of King Howell of Brittany.

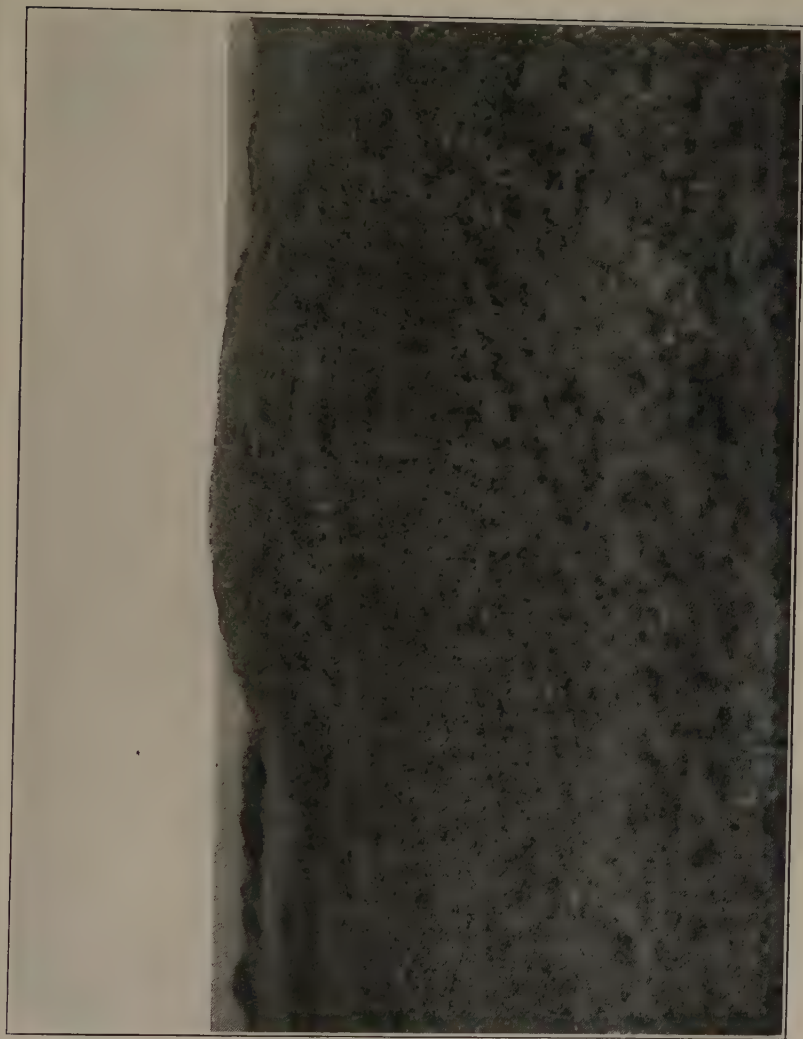
His thoughts were, however, with Iseult of Ireland, and when he was wounded mortally he sent a messenger to Tintagel for Iseult to come and nurse him. He arranged with the messenger that if Iseult was returning with him, white sails were to be hoisted on the ship, but that if for any reason she could or would not come, then the sails were to be black.

His wife, Iseult of the White Hands, who was watching for the arrival of the ship, being jealous, told him the sails were black, although they were white and Iseult was on board. When he heard this he died of a broken heart, and Iseult, on landing, finding Sir Tristram dead, claimed him against his wife, vowing that he belonged to her because she loved him the most. She then died of grief on the body of her lover.

It is also said that King Mark discovered Sir Tristram as he sat harping to Iseult, and killed them with his dagger; then repenting of his cruel deed, buried the two lovers in one grave at Tintagel and planted over them a rose bush and a vine, which in time became as inseparable as the two whose bodies reposed in the earth beneath.

No one can say where they lie in their last sleep, except that it is where the sea guards them, the sea they loved so well and

which with its swiftly rising and falling tides is like their love; the sea which murmured softly to them, and beside which they wandered whilst the minstrel knight sang to the mellow chords of his harp; the sea which separated Iseult from her home and her lover, and thundered in keeping with her passionate thoughts, her sorrow, and her despair as she sat alone in her prison. There through storm and calm the lovers shall rest until time shall be no more.



THE GRAVE OF SIR TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

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